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Meditations on the suffering
life on earth of our Lord

A. J. Downs.

Lent. 1878.

1/9 cat

419 **PINART**—Meditations on the Suffering Life of Our Lord, edited by Bp. FORBES, *Front.*, sm. 8vo, *cloth*, 1/9. 1868

"The Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls."

J. Masters, London.

MEDITATIONS

ON

THE SUFFERING LIFE ON EARTH

OF OUR

Lord and only Saviour

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FROM THE FRENCH OF PINART.

ADAPTED TO THE USE OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCH,

BY

THE BISHOP OF BRECHIN.

[Alex. Penrose Forbes]

Sixth Edition.

LONDON:
J. MASTERS AND CO., 78, NEW BOND STREET.
MDCCCLXXV.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY J. MASTERS AND CO.,
ALBION BUILDINGS, BARTHOLOMEW CLOSE.

NOTICE BY THE EDITOR.

THE work now offered to the public is a translation from "Les Flammes de l'Amour de JESUS," by Pinart, a religious treatise, founded on the "Saette di Fuoco," and as the author beautifully expresses it, "As the love of our Divine LORD is its topic, I have thought right to draw from the writings of those who loved Him best on earth, and have therefore not only taken much from the works of the holy fathers, especially SS. Bernard and Augustine, but have especially drawn abundantly from the well-spring of Holy Scripture." The author concludes his preliminary notice, by asking the prayers of his readers.

In presenting this treatise to the members of the Church, I have been careful to omit what I thought might make its use doubtful. I have also, in some places, modified expressions, which, real to fervid souls in the country where it was written, might seem exaggerated to the colder temperaments of the north. Furthermore, I have not hesitated here and there to alter expressions which might be capable of being misconstrued, and I have left out many allusions to practices of devotion which do not obtain among us. One chapter on the Blessed Virgin I have not inserted.

The chief merit of the work seems an affectionate and unreserved simplicity, calculated to familiarize the devout mind with a very high standard of perfection, and at the same time, to instruct us in meeting the daily difficulties and trials which are the gracious means whereby we are proved in this world. The Practical Resolutions speak very plainly to us, and the reference of everything to our LORD, as well as the place which the sanction of His love occupies in the work, must tend to animate our devotions, and to elevate our motives.

The Editor has, in conclusion, to convey his thanks to the Translator for the pains taken in its rendering. May it be a blessing to those who shall use it, and as the author says near the end, if one soul be profited by the perusal of it, the labour that has been bestowed upon it will not have been in vain.

A. P. F.

Brechin. Lent, 1850.

NOTICE TO SECOND EDITION.

THE demand for a Second Edition of this beautiful volume is so far cheering, that it indicates that, amid the many sorrows of the last few years, there still remain to us many by whom works of a high devotional tone are prized and read. The Editor has received more than one gratifying testimony to its usefulness, especially in affording subjects for thought in protracted and painful sick-beds. He has in this edition omitted the Latin quotations from the Fathers; in other respects it remains unaltered.

A. P. F.

Brechin. Lent, 1853.

INTRODUCTION.

If we apply ourselves seriously to consider the immensity of the love which Jesus Christ manifested to us during His life, and especially at His death, in submitting for our salvation to so many labours, sufferings, and torments, it is impossible not to be touched thereby, and, as it were, kindled with the desire to love a God Who loves our souls with so much intensity. "The wounds of our Redeemer," says S. Bonaventure, "have so great an efficacy, that they pierce with love the hardest hearts, and kindle the coldest souls." The experience of every day confirms the truth of this saying; it reveals to us, that a soul makes no greater progress in the love of God, than when it meditates unceasingly on the mysteries of the life and passion of Jesus Christ. In truth, would it be possible not to love Him, when we behold Him born in a stable, spending thirty years of His life in obscurity and privations, and dying amidst griefs and the contempt of man? No, it is not possible. All the saints have understood this truth, and have found delight in meditations upon these mysteries: by these means it is that they have reached so high a degree of holiness and perfection.

"Wilt thou," says the devout Thomas à Kempis, "learn to love Jesus with thy whole heart? wilt thou

thoroughly purify thy soul from its stains, and enrich it with every kind of virtue? Wilt thou gain glorious victories over the enemies of thy salvation, and receive abundant consolation in thy troubles and griefs? Wilt thou make great progress in prayer, obtain final perseverance, die holily, and reign eternally in heaven? Then exercise thyself in continual meditation upon the life and death of our Divine SAVIOUR." The Passion of JESUS CHRIST is the hidden treasure wherein GOD bestows His most precious gifts: it is the fulness of all virtues, the perfection of holiness: the more it is meditated upon, the more consolation and sweetness are found therein. It is the well-spring of compunction, and the most ardent furnace of Divine love. Most happy is he who knows how to draw from it.

In order to help in this matter, as far as we are able, those souls which desire sincerely to make progress in the love of JESUS, we shall, in this little work, endeavour to make known, by the testimony of Holy Scripture, the tenderness of our most loving SAVIOUR for us, and all He has done to oblige us to love Him. From thence we shall draw occasion to excite ourselves to gratitude, and to grief for our past sins and unthankfulness.

We shall say with S. Augustine: O LORD, vouchsafe to engrave upon my heart Thy wounds, that in them I may ever read Thy sorrow and Thy love: Thy Sorrow, to teach me to bear for Thee all sorrow, Thy love, to make me to despise all other love, save Thine.

"Not every one that saith unto Me, LORD, LORD, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My FATHER which is in heaven."[1] These are the

[1] S. Matth. vii. 21.

words of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. It is not enough to repeat to GOD that we love Him, we must prove it by deeds.[1] Let us not err herein; the love of GOD consists not in protestations of love for His service, of ecstasies, tears of tenderness, &c.; but it lies in the fulfilment of His Will. Now His Will being, that we should become holy and perfect,[2] we should strive to become so. For this, we must be faithful to all His Commandments, and to those of His Church, I say to *all*, because S. James teaches us, that "He that offendeth in one point, is guilty of all."[3] It is to facilitate to pious souls the means whereby to love GOD truly and solidly, that I have placed at the end of all the chapters in this work, a short instruction under the title of Practical Resolutions. They will find therein the secret of all holiness, which consists simply in conquering self in all things, not to please the creature, but solely for love of GOD. "Vince teipsum, conquer thyself." These two words are continually in the mouths of two eminent servants of GOD. "Ama et fac quod vis." These are the words of S. Augustine: "Love, and then do what thou wilt." For if thou love truly, thy actions will not belie the sentiments of thy heart. Ask unceasingly of GOD, O Theotime, that true love, which is proved by works. Never forget that holiness consists purely in the destruction of our vices, and not in spiritual consolations. Suffer for GOD, act for GOD, do in all things the Will of GOD. This is real love.

[1] S. John iii. 18. [2] 1 Thess. iv. 3. [3] S. James ii. 10.

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MEDITATIONS

ON THE

SUFFERING LIFE ON EARTH

OF OUR

Lord and only Saviour.

CHAPTER I.

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST BECAME MAN, IN ORDER TO MAKE US UNDERSTAND THE LOVE WHICH HE HAS FOR US, AND TO ENGAGE US TO LOVE HIM.

"CHRIST also hath loved us, and given Himself for us."—Eph. v. 2.

GOD, that He might draw to Himself the hearts of all men, and possess Himself of their love, had loaded them with all sorts of benefits; but they, ungrateful, far from responding to His advances, or rendering to Him love in return for His love, refused even to acknowledge Him for their LORD and GOD; to their shame they addicted themselves to the worship of idols of wood and stone, prostituting their homage and adoration to the vilest of creatures. Scarcely in one small corner of the earth, in Judea, was this GOD of the universe acknowledged to be such by the people He had chosen to Himself—while even there, He was more feared than loved. But as He would be more loved than feared by us, *He became man like our-*

selves; He came to inhabit this earth.[1] He led amongst us a poor, laborious and hidden life: He gave Himself up to a cruel and ignominious death—and wherefore? that He might show forth the immensity of His love towards us, and win our hearts. Yes, this Divine SAVIOUR willed to be born in a stable, and to die upon a cross, only that He might show us how much He loves us, and now much He desires to be loved by us. *Dilexit nos, et tradidit semet-ipsum pro nobis.*

What would have become of us after the sin of our first father, if JESUS CHRIST had not vouchsafed to redeem us? Alas! abandoned to our own weakness, and slaves to our passions, we should have plunged into every crime, and dragged on here below an unhappy existence. Crushed beneath the weight of the reprobation of an offended GOD, we should never have felt our heart thrill with joy, in the sweet hope of heaven; never have experienced the delight of Divine Love; never have tasted the sweetness of that peace, which a good conscience affords. Miserable beings! ever in conflict with our passions, ever at war with ourselves and with our fellow-creatures, we should have known this life but to curse it, and we should have quitted this earth, the witness of our sighs and tears, only to fall into the everlasting abyss of hell.

Happily for us, JESUS, Whose goodness and mercy are infinite, had compassion on our misery. Notwithstanding our rebellion, He loved us still, and consented to redeem us. Had He not done this, and had He left us a prey to the hell we had deserved, He would not have been thereby less great or perfect. His happiness would not have received any injury. But constrained by His

[1] S. John i. 14.

love, He resolved to open to us the gates of heaven, by the hardest travail, by the most dreadful torments, as though His felicity had depended upon ours. He might have redeemed us without suffering, and yet He did it not: He willed rather to deliver us from eternal death, by His own death, and although He had thousands of means in His power whereby to save us, He preferred to choose the most humiliating and painful one, whereby to acquire a greater claim to our gratitude and love. A single prayer of JESUS, one tear of His, one drop alone of His blood, would have sufficed to save us. Yes, replies S. John Chrysostom, a single tear of JESUS would have quite sufficed for our redemption, but it sufficed not to our Divine SAVIOUR to prove to us all the love He bears us, and it was in order to give us a stronger proof thereof, and to impose upon us a greater obligation to love Him, that having had to choose between honours and contempt, He preferred a life of poverty, and a death full of grief and opprobrium,[1] to a life of repose and glory.

Behold what our GOD has done for us! Behold how He has loved us! What have we done for Him?

Oh, ungrateful that we are! The LORD JESUS crowns us with mercy and lovingkindness.[2] He gives Himself wholly to us, makes Himself man for us, and we do not love Him! What! we love a man who gives us some tokens of affection: nay, we love the very lower animals which caress us, and we refuse to love our GOD, Who overwhelms us with benefits. To excite our gratitude towards a fellow-creature, a kind word, or even a look or smile is enough: GOD to gain our love exhausts all the treasures of His power and wisdom, and we will not respond to His

[1] Heb. xii. 2. [2] Ps. ciii. 4.

tenderness. O heaven! shall we never feel shame for this our vile ingratitude? Shall we never meet the infinite love of so good a FATHER, but with lukewarmness and contempt?

O my gracious LORD! suffer me thus to speak to Thee! No, never more will I be ungrateful as I have been till now: rather will I love Thee henceforth with my whole heart. O my SAVIOUR, may that love which led Thee to die for me upon Mount Calvary, cause me to die to all earthly affections, and be consumed by that sacred fire which Thou camest to enkindle here below.[1] I curse a thousand times those unworthy pleasures, which have occasioned Thee so many torments; and I repent with my whole soul, O my beloved Redeemer! for having so much offended Thee. For the future I would rather die than cause Thee the least displeasure, and I will do all which depends on me to please Thee. Thou hast spared nothing to obtain my love, so neither will I spare anything for Thine. Thou hast unreservedly loved me, I will love Thee likewise without reserve. I love Thee, O my GOD and my All. Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but GOD is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.[2] Amen.

Practical Resolutions.

SALVATION IS THE ONE THING NEEDFUL.

Christian, whosoever thou art who readest this work, reflect to-day, seriously, upon the great matter of thy

[1] S. Luke xii. 49. [2] Ps. lxxiii. 25, 26.

salvation. Thy salvation! Ah, that is what should occupy thee unceasingly, because, according to the Word of the LORD JESUS CHRIST Himself, "one thing is needful." Labour as much as thou pleasest to become rich; amass treasures without end; be it so; but I pray thee, what will it profit thee, if thou lose thy soul? Yet a few days, and the world with its riches, its pleasures, and its honours, will have passed away from thee; what wilt thou then think of all these things, if thou art unhappy enough to lose thy soul? O my brother, I implore thee to enter into thyself, and ascertain how thou standest as to the great and only matter of thy salvation. If hitherto thou hast done little or nothing for heaven, there is yet time to put thy hand to the work; make haste. Set thy conscience in order, and if by GOD's mercy it does not upbraid thee with any grave sin, labour to enrich it with good works, and adorn it with solid virtues. Begin from to-day. In order to that, recall often to thy mind that saying of our Master, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul, and what shall he give in exchange for his soul?"[1] Let this sentence be ever present to thy mind, and pray GOD to make thee understand it. If thou rightly understand it, it will infallibly touch thy soul, it will cause thee to see the vanity, the nothingness of the things of this world; before long, thou wilt become a saint. And if thou be a saint, or at least if thou strive to become one, what joy wilt thou not cause to our good Master! What peace will arise in thy soul! what a blessed hope will dwell in the depth of thy heart, of reigning one day in heaven! To the work, then, my brother, to the work! The Blessed JESUS is

[1] S. Matth. xvi. 26.

with thee! He leaves none of His children alone. He encourages their exertions, and supports their weakness; put thou thy trust in Him, and thou shalt be saved.

CHAPTER II.

On the Love which God has shown to us, in giving His only Son for us.

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son."—S. John iii. 16.

Oh, how deep is the meaning of that particle—*so!* This little word contains that which we shall never comprehend: it implies the vastness of the love which constrained God to give us, not a servant, not an angel, but His own Son; and to condemn to death that innocent Son, to save guilty man! Ah! who could have made us this gift of Infinite Price, but a God Whose love knows no limits? How ought we not to bless our God for this His loving kindness! We were dead in sin to the life of grace, and Jesus by His death has raised us up; we were miserable, loathsome, abominable, but God, by means of Jesus Christ, has rendered us beautiful and dear in His eyes, having made us accepted in the Beloved![1] Not only has He delivered us from sin, but He has in Jesus Christ blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Heavenly places in Christ.[2] O wonderful condescension of the tenderness of our God! O incomprehensible love! to redeem the slave, He delivers up His only Son!

[1] Eph. i. 6. [2] Eph. i. 3.

Let us strive to be fully penetrated with the sense of these words—"He gave His only-begotten SON." It was not to the angels that JESUS CHRIST was given: it was not for them that He became man, and was born of a pure Virgin: no, but upon us, children of Adam, was this precious gift bestowed. To us has JESUS been given; to us He belongs; with Him and in Him we possess infinite possessions and treasures! But alas! we know not at all what a gift GOD bestowed in giving us His only SON! We think not at all of the advantages we derive from the Incarnation of the Word. These advantages are nevertheless so great, that we must in some degree rejoice in Adam's sin. In fact, the LORD JESUS CHRIST has given us more than Adam deprived us of; we have gained more by the redemption than we lost by the fall, and "not as the offence," says S. Paul, "so also is the gift." O happy sin, which demanded so great a Restorer! O happy and needful the sin of Adam, which the death of JESUS CHRIST has effaced!

"If thou knewest," said our SAVIOUR to the woman of Samaria,—"if thou knewest the gift of GOD, and Who it is Who saith to thee, Give Me to drink."[1] O my soul! unto thee are these words addressed. If thou knewest what JESUS is, thou wouldst comprehend the extent of the love which constrained GOD to give Him to thee; if thou knewest what JESUS is,—if thou knewest what He has merited for thee by His Incarnation,—thou wouldst comprehend all that thou owest of love and gratitude to Him Who has bestowed so excellent a gift upon thee! "LORD," said S. Augustine, "he who is ungrateful respecting the blessing of creation, deserves hell:

[1] S. John iv. 10.

but a new hell would be needed for that man who is ungrateful respecting that of redemption." They tell of a holy man, that, when those who had received some especial favour from GOD, spoke of it to him, admiring the Divine goodness; "It is not in that," he replied, "that He is to be admired; it is in that GOD so loved the world, that He gave His only SON."

O eternal FATHER! I thank Thee that Thou hast given me Thy SON to be my Redeemer; and Thou, O SON of GOD, I thank Thee for having redeemed me with so much love, and at the cost of so many pangs. What would have become of me, O my JESUS! after all the sins of which I have been guilty, if Thou hadst not died for me? Alas! the number of my sins has greatly surpassed that of the hairs of my head.[1] For a long time I have lived but to outrage Thee! Why am I constrained to dwell with Mesech?[2] Wherefore did I not yield my last sigh, while emerging from the waters of Baptism? Wherefore did I not die before I was able to offend Thee? Useless regrets! the evil is done. O my SAVIOUR! I beseech Thee, give me a portion of that hatred which Thou didst bear to my sins during Thy mortal life, and grant me the pardon of them. But pardon sufficeth me not; I desire beyond this Thy love, because Thou meritest exceedingly to be loved. Vouchsafe, then, to grant it me equally. Thou hast loved me unto death, and I will likewise love Thee unto death. I love Thee, O Infinite Goodness, with my whole soul; I love Thee above myself, and desire to fix in Thee alone all the affections of my heart. O help me, and suffer me not to be still ungrateful, as I have been through the past! Make me

[1] Ps. xl. 12. [2] Ps. cxx. 5.

to know what Thou wilt have from me, because I resolve, with the help of Thy grace, to do all, absolutely all, that Thou wilt. Even so, Amen.

Practical Resolutions.

SMALL FAULTS ARE TO BE FEARED.

There is a truth, of the highest importance in the spiritual life, upon which all pious souls should meditate seriously. Hear it, as spoken by the HOLY SPIRIT,—"He who contemneth small things, and who no longer almost notices them, will fall by little and little." Understand this word,—"will fall by little and little." He will fall imperceptibly, scarcely conscious of it; but he will fall. To-day he will allow himself in a very slight falsehood, under pretence that it is but a little sin; to-morrow he will allow himself in a more serious one, and he will end by falling into great disorders. Fear,—oh fear, to despise small things,—beware of little sins; they are in some respects more dangerous than great ones. "I venture," says S. John Chrysostom, "to advance a proposition, which will be thought surprising and unheard of; it is that it sometimes appears to me that one should be less careful to flee great sins, than to avoid slight faults. The enormity of those naturally inspires one with a horror of them; but we are easily familiarised with these, by reason that they are inconsiderable; and the slight with which we pass them over preventing us from making any effort to correct ourselves of them, they soon become so great by our negligence, that at length we come into a state to be no longer able to rid ourselves of them." I repeat again once more, beware of little sins, because

they lead to lukewarmness; fear and avoid little faults, because (said our LORD) "He who is faithful in that which is least, will be faithful in that which is much; and he who is unjust in the least, will be unjust also in much."[1] Be watchful over thyself to-day, and endeavour to live in such a manner, that this evening thou mayest say to our holy LORD, "My good Master, I have no sin entirely wilful wherewith to reproach myself to-night. Praise be to Thee; for it is Thy powerful Hand which has sustained me. Vouchsafe to pardon all the sins of frailty which have escaped me; to-morrow I will strive to do better still."

CHAPTER III.

JESUS CHRIST HAS MERITED FOR US THE PARDON OF OUR SINS BY THE POURING OUT OF ALL HIS BLOOD.

"Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His Own Blood, He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."—Heb. ix. 12.

WHAT could the blood of every victim avail to procure to us Divine grace? The sacrifices under the old law had no efficacy in themselves. They were, according to the expression of the Apostle, "weak and beggarly," and never could have destroyed the wall of separation which sin had raised between GOD and us. Who then will have might sufficient to restore us to the favour of heaven? Shall it be man himself? Alas! man is a child of wrath;[2] he was born at enmity with GOD, and with the impossi-

[1] S. Luke xvi. 10. [2] Eph. ii. 3.

bility of performing of himself any work which could be agreeable to that Holy GOD Who can take no pleasure in the services of His enemies. Shall it be an angel? But an angel is a mere creature, whose merits are consequently finite and limited, while the wrong done to GOD by the sin of man is an infinite evil. It is then GOD only Who can merit for us the pardon of our sins and life eternal. Yea, it is He only, and JESUS CHRIST, in making Himself man to redeem us, did that for us, which could only be done by Him. As He had not disdained to create us by Himself, He judged it not unworthy of Himself to redeem us by Himself. He loved us too well to confide to any other the happiness and glory of saving us. "I am the LORD," says He to us, by the mouth of Isaiah, "and I will not give My glory to another;"[1] and certainly He would have sacrificed this glory, had He confided to an angel the charge of redeeming us. For had He contented Himself with bringing us out of nothing, and with giving us the life we enjoy here below, and had commanded an angel to merit for us that other life, which is infinitely better, it follows that we should have been indebted to the angel, for that which is the more worthy, and to GOD for that which is the less. But now, we may reverently suppose GOD was too jealous of His glory and of our love, to give to a creature the work of our redemption. Not only willed He to give us the first life in creating us, but He willed likewise to give us the second in redeeming us, in order that all our love should belong to Him, and that no other should lay any claim to deprive Him of the least portion of it. That it is which S. Augustine has perfectly expressed in these words: "As GOD was already our

[1] Isa. xlviii. 11.

Creator, He would be likewise our Redeemer, that our love might not be divided between the Creator and the Redeemer."

"O man!" exclaims S. Bernard, "confess then the dignity and the nobleness of thy soul! that soul which thou draggest through the mire, that soul which thou sacrificest to thy body, knowest thou at what a price GOD hath estimated it? Knowest thou that it is of more worth than the whole world? If thou art ignorant thereof, know that thy GOD gave up His life for the love of it, which life He would never have given up for the whole world, nor even for a thousand worlds." Understand now how much thou art guilty when thou defilest it by sin!

From what we have just said, it is evident that even if an angel had been able to satisfy the Divine justice for us, and to redeem us, GOD would not have suffered it; it would have been His Will to take upon Himself, as in truth He did, the care of meriting heaven for us, and of rescuing us from hell, in order the better to prove to us the greatness of His love. O, who may tell us how much GOD loves poor weak creatures like us? For love of us, the GOD of heaven and earth descended from the height of His Throne, and clothed Himself with our humanity; for love of us, He willed to be born in a stable, with but a little straw whereon to rest His delicate limbs. He willed to spend thirty years in the shop of a poor carpenter, to earn a piece of coarse bread by the labour of His Hands, and to eat it in the sweat of His Brow: finally, for love of us, He willed to shed His Blood to the last drop, dying upon a Cross, amidst the most agonizing pains.

O what good cause have we to exclaim with holy Job:

"What is man that Thou shouldst magnify him, and that Thou shouldst set Thine heart upon him?"[1] Behold! the powerful Monarch of the whole universe, that GOD to Whom nothing is wanting, and Who is the self-existent, seeks our love, and strives to merit it, in giving His own life for us! How can we ever acknowledge so extensive a tenderness? O let us love Him; love can only be repaid by love: let us give Him our heart of which He is so jealous, and let us be faithful in dedicating all its yearnings, all its affections to Him without reserve. Let us not forget, that if we already owe to Him our entire selves, for the blessing of creation, we owe ourselves yet still more to Him for the blessing of redemption. In order to create us, it cost Him but a word. "He spake, and it was made." But in order to redeem us, what has He not done and suffered?

O my LORD JESUS, behold me at Thy Feet! Vouchsafe to accept the homage which my poor heart renders Thee! Alas! one heart is too little to love Thee with; and had I moreover the hearts of all men to consecrate to Thee, yet would they be too few. What then would be my ingratitude if I divided mine between Thee and creatures? No, my Beloved, it shall not be thus. Thou desirest my whole heart, and assuredly Thou deservest to possess it entirely. I will then give it Thee without reserve. If I am not able to give it Thee as I ought, take it Thyself, and enable me to say to Thee, in all truth, "Thou art the GOD of my heart."[2] O my Redeemer, by the merits of the abject life, full of tribulations, which Thou willedst to lead on earth for me, give me true humility, in order that I may love contempt and the

[1] Job vii. 17. [2] Ps. lxxiii. 26.

hidden life. Cause me lovingly to accept the infirmities, affronts, persecutions, inward griefs, and all crosses which may come to me from Thy Hand: cause me to love Thee, and afterwards dispose of me according to Thy good pleasure. O Heart of JESUS, inflamed with love of me, inflame my heart with an ardent love of Thee, and give me the grace to be entirely Thine before I die. Cause, that in order to please Thee, I may mortify unceasingly my vicious inclinations, my tastes, my caprices. Cause me to renounce wholly my self-indulgence, my pleasures and above all, my will. O my gracious LORD, I implore Thee with tears, to give me all, because I need all. I am poor, but shall be rich, if Thou vouchsafe to cast on me a look of pity. O my LORD, have compassion upon me! Amen.

Practical Resolutions.

PURITY OF INTENTION.

And now after all that the LORD JESUS CHRIST hath done for thy love, wilt thou do nothing in acknowledgment of His tenderness? This kind Master requireth from thee nothing too painful or extraordinary. All He requireth of thee is, that thou shouldst perform thy daily actions as perfectly as possible. A Christian's day is composed of a certain series of actions, some holy, the rest indifferent, &c. Rising, lying down at night, prayer, Daily Service, Holy Communion, visits, labour, walking, meals, sleep, such are the different employments which vary the life of man. Well, wouldst thou be holy, and surely please thy LORD? Do all these with the greatest purity of intention, and solely with the view of being pleasing to GOD. Practise

the advice of S. Paul, "Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of GOD,"[1] and soon thou wilt attain to an eminent perfection. "Could one only attain to it," says a good man, "by exalted employments, great elevations of soul, and sublime meditations, thou mightest have some excuse, plead thy incapacity, and say thou canst not soar thus high. Were it required of thee to scourge thyself daily to blood-flowing, to fast upon bread and water, to walk always barefooted, to wear constantly a hair shirt and sackcloth, thou mightest reply that thou dost not feel thy strength equal thereto. But JESUS CHRIST requireth not any of this from thee. He simply desireth that thou shouldst do well those things which thou doest ordinarily. If, therefore, thou hast hitherto neglected to offer all thy actions to GOD, especially thy first waking, thy repasts, and thy recreations, begin from this day henceforward to offer them to Him; if thou hast prayed with little reverence, attention, and fervour, form the resolution to act better for the future. A merchant in his commercial business, the mother of a family in her household, a scholar amid his studies, can thus attain to perfection at little cost. Thou wouldst be most guilty if thou didst not use so simple a means to render thyself more and more pleasing to a GOD, Who, for thy love, and in order to thy happiness, spared neither His own glory, nor repose, nor yet His life."

[1] 1 Cor. x. 31.

CHAPTER IV.

The Mercy and Love of Jesus Christ for us shine forth in His Incarnation.

"The kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared."—Titus iii. 4.

God has loved us from all eternity,[1] and He Himself declares to us this consoling truth by the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah. But His love for us had in some degree remained unknown until the period when it pleased our Lord Jesus Christ to manifest it to us, in making Himself man. "Previous to the incarnation of the Word," says S. Bernard, "the power of God had been manifested in creating the world, and His wisdom in governing it; but when Jesus Christ consented to take unto Himself our nature, then appeared the love which this Divine Saviour bears to men." In fact after having seen that Jesus Christ our Lord led so arduous and painful a life, after having seen Him die upon a Cross amid such torments, would it not be to do Him the greatest of wrongs to doubt for a single instant the infinite love which He hath for us? Yes, He loveth us exceedingly, and because He loveth us, He desireth in return to be loved by us. Is it possible we should be ungrateful? Is it possible that we should remain insensible to this love of Jesus? Let us then think seriously to what a frightful state of misery and weakness sin had reduced our soul before He came upon earth to save it. We were stained with guilt, and condemned to death and to hell; and if

[1] Jer. xxxi. 3.

GOD in His justice had abandoned us to our fate, as He has abandoned the devils, we should have had nothing to gainsay. "For who shall say, What hast Thou done? or who shall withstand Thy judgment? or who shall accuse Thee for the nations that perish, whom Thou hast made? or who shall come to stand against Thee to be revenged for the unrighteous men?"[1] We had nothing, absolutely nothing, which could entitle us to one of His looks of goodness and benevolence. What do I say? Sin had rendered us loathsome and abominable in His eyes, and nevertheless behold the LORD JESUS touched with mercy descends upon earth to manifest His love for us by dying upon a Cross. We were poor, and He comes to enrich us with all kinds of spiritual gifts: we were plunged in thick darkness, and He comes to enlighten us with the torch of His Divine doctrine: we were condemned to an eternity of punishment in hell, and He comes to open to us the gates of heaven, and merit for us an eternity of happiness: we were His enemies, and He comes to reconcile us to Himself, and restore us to the intimacy of His friendship. O Christians! since our GOD has shown us so much love, even when we were so wicked, *since He has loved us first, let us in our turn love Him with our whole heart.*[2]

"Our LORD JESUS CHRIST," says S. Paul, "died for us all, in order that we should live unto Him."[3] Can we truthfully bear this consoling testimony of ourselves, that hitherto we have lived unto the LORD JESUS? Can we say that all our actions have been inspired by the love of JESUS? Alas! it may be we have not yet lived a single day, a single hour unto Him! O what cause is here for

[1] Wisd. xii. 12. [2] 1 S. John iv. 19. [3] 2 Cor. v. 15.

shame! A GOD has done all for the love of us, and we have as yet done nothing for the love of Him. Let us then begin seriously to-day to love Him and to live only for Him. To live unto JESUS is to accomplish in all things His holy will, to deny oneself continually, to do violence to oneself at every moment, to bear the Cross with submission and love. To live unto JESUS is to pray without ceasing, to fulfil with exactitude all the duties of one's calling, to mortify oneself without slackness, to practise oneself in humility, chastity, charity towards our neighbour, gentleness, and inward recollection. To live unto JESUS is to mourn over the disorders and sins of one's past life, to detach oneself from created things, to sigh for the happiness of heaven. What of all this have we done hitherto? Nothing,—or next to nothing, perhaps. Let us at least know how to humble ourselves at the sight of such baseness; and let us make generous resolutions for the future. O my SAVIOUR! when will the time come when I shall begin to acknowledge the love which Thou hast testified to me? Hitherto, instead of loving Thee, I have repaid Thee with ingratitude and despised Thy grace; yet, inasmuch as Thou art infinite goodness, I will not lose my confidence. Thou hast promised forgiveness to the penitent: oh, have pity on me, and let me feel the effects of Thy promise. I have dishonoured Thee in preferring before Thee my ease, my pleasure, but I repent of it now with my whole soul, and nothing afflicts me so much as the remembrance of having thus offended Thee, my Sovereign Good! Pardon me, and bind me wholly to Thyself by an eternal bond of love, in order that I may no more forsake Thee, but henceforward live but to love Thee, and to do Thy will. Yes, my LORD, I will live

unto Thee alone, and love Thee only. There was a time when I forsook Thee for the creature: now I leave all, and give myself to Thee.

Practical Resolutions.

TO SHUN VAIN-GLORY IN OUR ACTIONS.

To-day retire seriously within thyself, and see with what intention thou performest thine actions. If thou performest them mechanically, without any intention good or evil, they will be useless to thee for heaven. If thou doest them with the intention to please men, and through vain-glory, these actions, how good soever they might be in themselves, become evil and worthy of punishment. If, on the contrary, thou hast GOD alone in view in all thy works, if thou seekest only His glory and the fulfilment of His will, thou art happy; for thou wilt lay up for thyself treasures in heaven. Shun, then, vain-glory, and *take heed that thou do not thy works before men to be seen of them, else thou wilt have no reward in heaven.*[1] O my GOD! what is all the glory of this world, if not a vain smoke? Content thyself in thy good works with the consoling testimony of thy conscience; content thyself with knowing that thou hast a GOD for the witness of thine actions, and go not to crave from men a false glory which would make thee lose the real one. The opinion of men is nothing, and thou art not the better for it if they have praised thee. Say and repeat incessantly from the depth of thy heart, *Glory be to* GOD *only in the highest heaven, in all ages.*[2] LORD, *not unto us, but to Thy Name give the praise.*[3] Conceal thy good works as much

[1] S. Matth. vi. 1. [2] 1 Tim. i. 17. [3] Ps. cxv. 1.

as thou canst, and take care always before beginning thy actions to direct thy intention aright, saying with the good man, "My GOD, I am about to do this for the love of Thee and for Thy greater glory." If the evil spirit of vain-glory assail thee in the midst of an action, do not discontinue it on that score, but say to him with S. Bernard, "I began it not for thee, neither will I discontinue it because of thee." All for GOD! all for His glory! let this ever be thy motto.

CHAPTER V.

GOD THE FATHER SENT HIS SON ON EARTH IN ORDER TO RESTORE TO US THAT LIFE WHICH SIN HAD CAUSED US TO LOSE.

"In this was manifested the love of GOD towards us, because that GOD sent His only-begotten SON into the world, that we might live through Him."—1 S. John iv. 9.

ALL men were dead through sin, and they would have remained in that state of death, if the Eternal FATHER had not sent His only SON to recall them to life, by the shedding of all His Blood. O wonder! a GOD to die for man! And what is the man?

The seraphic S. Bonaventura, meditating upon this mystery of love, exclaimed, "O good JESU! what hast Thou done? Whither hath love carried Thee? What hast Thou seen in me to inspire Thee with so much love? Wherefore hast Thou willed to die for me? What am I, that Thou hast purchased my soul at so vast a price?

What else am I, O my GOD! than a vile nothing, and an ungrateful creature? But it is precisely in this that the infinite love of GOD shines with most brightness for us. Our vileness, our miseries, have not wearied His love; on the contrary, they have increased it. The more our sins have alienated us from Him, and rendered us unworthy of His love, with so much the more ardour has He sought us back, and heaped tokens of His tenderness upon us; and to so great a length has He carried that His tenderness for us, that He fastened to a Cross His innocent SON, in order to snatch us from Hell, and beget us to His love. O inconceivable wonder of the love of GOD for us! . . . . How long shall we be ungrateful? How long shall we refuse to love a GOD Who loves us with so much ardour?" The love which GOD has evinced to us is a real mystery, says S. Fulgentius. We had despised this GOD of goodness; we had outraged Him; we had incurred His abhorrence, in estranging ourselves from Him; and He has not left off loving us, even to sending His own SON upon earth, in order that He should become our Friend, our Brother, our SAVIOUR. He loved us when we were sick, that He might cure us; when we were wicked and perverse, that He might render us good; when we were dead, that He might restore us to life. He saw from the height of His throne our profound misery, and was moved thereby to compassion; He saw that we strayed in the paths of iniquity, and He gave us His SON that He might teach us the way to heaven. This adorable SON came upon earth, and during thirty-three years that He remained amongst us, He laboured by all imaginable means to rescue us from the devil, and from our passions. He has sought the possession of our

heart, as though it were not possible for Him to be happy without us; and He willed to ascend a Cross for our salvation, in order to merit our love. "What wonderful goodness on the part of GOD," exclaims S. Bernard, "to have thus sought man! What a signal honour for man to have been thus sought for by GOD!" Yes, man may justly glory in this honour; he may feel within himself a holy pride, not of what he is in himself, since he is nothing, but of the great estimation in which his Creator holds him. All the riches and glory of this world are nothing in comparison of that estimation wherewith GOD has honoured him.

Since JESUS CHRIST has so loved me—since He has so valued me, notwithstanding my nothingness—since He has raised me to so high a rank, and to so great dignity, in consenting to become my Brother, shall I go and abase myself still by attachment to the things of this world, and above all by sin? Since GOD has in some degree raised me to Himself, shall I go and plunge again into the mire of my vices? No, never! and by the help of His grace, without which I can do nothing, rather will I die a thousand times than do so. My GOD has loved me; I will love Him in my turn: my GOD has set a value upon me; I will recognise my dignity by fleeing even the shadow of sin: my GOD died through love of me; I will, if need be, die for love of Him; He will have might sufficient to sustain my weakness.

O LORD! Thou Who hast given to us JESUS Thy SON, in order that we might recover the life which we had lost through sin, have pity on me, and give me grace to live henceforth only unto Him Who gave His life and His blood for my love. O my beloved Redeemer! O gentle LORD JESUS! At the sight of Thy wounds,

and of that Cross whereon I beheld Thee expiring for me, I consecrate to Thee my life, and my whole will. Cause me to be wholly Thine! Cause me henceforth to seek but Thee, to sigh but after Thee! Grant me the grace to say to Thee all the days of my life, "My GOD, I love Thee!" Grant me the grace to die pronouncing these same words, "My GOD, I love Thee!" The precious grace to die a good and holy death I ask of Thee, in the name of Thy sacred sufferings.

Practical Resolutions.

BLESSED ARE THEY THAT WEEP.

Christian soul who readest this, meditate for a few moments upon these words of our good Master,—"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."[1] O what motives hast thou to mourn!

1st. *Thou must mourn for thy sins.* Alas! hast thou ever mourned for those sins, so numerous, so heinous, and of which thou hast been guilty? And yet they were the cause of the death of thy LORD, and thou hast no assurance that they will not cast thee into hell. Knowest thou if they have been forgiven thee? Knowest thou whether thou art worthy of love or of hatred? S. Paul, the apostle of nations, knew it not, and trembled! S. Bernard, the oracle of his age, knew it not, and trembled; thou too knowest it not, and yet tremblest not? Tremble, then, and mourn.

2ndly. *Thou must mourn for the sins of others.* Parents, you must mourn for the sins of your children, which perhaps you have caused by your neglect or bad example. Pastors of souls, you must mourn for the sins of your

[1] S. Matth. v. 4.

flocks. Christians, we must mourn for the sins of our brethren, because these sins offend our GOD.

3rdly. *Thou must mourn by reason of thy long exile upon earth.* Indeed thou bearest the grace of GOD in so weak a vessel, that thou art exposed every moment to the risk of losing it. How many have lost it before thee, and have never again found it! Continually assailed by the temptations of the flesh, the world, and the devil, thou incessantly runnest the risk of losing heaven, and of falling into hell. Mourn, then, by reason of this exile. During the whole course of this day, live in much self-recollection; excite thyself to compunction: in order to that, think often of thy past sins and present miseries; recite the 51st Psalm, (*Miserere mei, Deus,*) and try to become penetrated with the sentiments of penitence which it contains.

Mourn, O Christian soul, mourn! Thy LORD has set thee an example of this, since He wept for thy sins. Mourn, and soon thou shalt know how sweet are the tears of penitence.

CHAPTER VI.

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST CAME DOWN ON EARTH, NOT FROM NECESSITY, OR FOR HIS OWN SAKE, BUT THROUGH LOVE OF US.

"Through the tender mercy of our GOD, whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us."—S. Luke i. 78.

IF the SON of GOD came upon earth to redeem us, it was from no obligation on His part thereto, nor from

obedience to necessity; neither was it for His own interest, since His happiness and glory are wholly independent, not only of man, but of every creature. "He is the LORD," says the Psalmist, "and our goods are nothing unto Him."[1] He came, because He was constrained by His tender mercy, by compassion for our miseries, and by the desire of demonstrating to us His love in bringing an effectual remedy for all our evils.[2] And this it is which the Church celebrates almost daily while offering the Holy Eucharist, when she says, "JESUS CHRIST came down from heaven for us men, and for our salvation." She says not that He came down from thence, that He was incarnate, suffered, and was buried, for His own interest, but for our own salvation. What goodness and what mercy on the part of our GOD!

But wherefore, O LORD, since Thou hast compassion on lost man, is it necessary that Thou shouldst come Thyself upon earth? Sufficeth it not that Thou shouldst send hither an angel to redeem it? No; the Eternal Word Itself is made flesh, that man may know the greatness of the love for him. S. Augustine teaches us that one of the principal reasons which constrained our LORD to come down upon earth, was in order that men might comprehend to what a degree He has loved them. But, O my JESUS! after Thou hast come upon earth to make Thyself loved, how many are to be found who love Thee sincerely? Alas! what cause have not I to blush with shame and confusion! For, O my GOD, Thou knowest how little I have loved Thee in the past; Thou knowest how much I have despised Thy love! My beloved Redeemer, I repent that I have thus despised

[1] Ps. xvi. 2. [2] 1 S. Pet. i. 3.

Thee, and I desire to make all reparation by my penitence.

Too late have I known Thee, Thou True Light: too late have I known Thee. But there was a mighty and dark cloud before the eyes of my vanity, so that I could not see the Sun of Righteousness and the Light of Truth. I was enveloped in darkness. The child of darkness, I took pleasure in my darkness, because I knew not the beauty of Thy light. I was blind, and I cherished my blindness, because it gave me more licence to follow my passions. Who is He Who has led me out when I was sitting blind in the shadow of death? Who has dispersed this cloud? Who is He Who has taken my hand to lead me out? Who is my enlightener? I sought not Him, but He sought me. I called not Him, but He called me. Who is it? It is Thou, LORD, my GOD, merciful and piteous; the FATHER of compassions. Thou didst descend from heaven to earth, to draw me out of my disorderly life, and to place me among the number of Thy children. What shall I render to Thee for such a benefit? I strayed far from the path of Thy commandments, and fled far from Thee; and Thou hast had the goodness to follow after me to stop me in my flight, and to bring me back from my wanderings. O my JESUS! I repeat again unto Thee, what shall I render Thee for so tender a love? I will love Thee with my whole heart, with all my strength, above all creatures, above myself. Help Thou my weakness.

Since our LORD JESUS CHRIST has so loved us, that He came on earth to redeem us, and that He has dragged us out of the mire of our iniquities with so compassionate a mercy, how can it be that we consecrate not ourselves

entirely to His service? Why does not our heart melt like wax in the presence of so ardent a love? Is it possible that we should not desire to endure a thousand martyrdoms for Him Who has willed to suffer so much for us? Can we be capable of forgetting the goodness and love of our Divine SAVIOUR? No, it shall not be thus; we shall know how to love a GOD Who through His death has given us life; Who has caused us to pass from darkness into light, from banishment into our country, from tears to joy, and from endless miseries to an eternal glory. O my LORD! Who for love of me hast not spared Thyself, I beseech Thee so to wound my heart with Thy love, that I may be able to love none but Thee. Cause that all my consolation lie in being crucified with Thee, and that my only happiness be to think upon Thee night and day.

O Eternal Light, that outshinest all created lights, send down a ray from above to penetrate the inward parts of my soul. Purify and gladden, cheer and enliven my soul with all its powers, that it may be united to Thee in joy. O when shall the happy hour come when Thou wilt fill me with Thy Presence, and Thou shalt be all in all? Till Thou accordest me this grace, I shall still have imperfect joy. Alas! the old man still lives in me; he is not yet crucified, he is not mortified. He still lusteth strongly against the spirit, and excites inward commotion, and suffers not the kingdom to remain in peace; but "Thou rulest the raging of the sea; Thou stillest the waves thereof when they arise." Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I have none other trust or refuge but in Thee, O LORD. Amen.

Practical Resolutions.

MENTAL RECOLLECTION.

Endeavour to pass this whole day in the deepest collectedness of soul, and leave nothing undone which can make it become to thee a holy habit. It is impossible to make progress in virtue without collectedness of soul, since without it one can neither pray with fervour, nor keep a watch over self, nor discover one's evil habits. Collectedness of soul is acquired and retained by prayer, and by mortification, of which we shall speak rather later. It is likewise acquired by silence, and by frequent motions of the heart towards GOD.

1st. *By silence.* Lay a restraint upon thy tongue, and speak little, and with discretion. "He who bridleth not his tongue," saith S. James, "and seemeth to himself to be religious, deceiveth himself."[1] Speak little, because, according to Scripture, too great a flood of words is the sign of a fool. "A fool also is full of words."[2] Speak little, because intemperance of speech is not only an obstacle to collectedness of soul, but is likewise the cause of many sins; so that one may fearlessly assert that a great talker commits many sins which a prudent man avoids.[3] Speak little, because for one sin which we may commit, by keeping silence where it would be well to speak, we commit a hundred by speaking upon all occasions. Speak little, because while silence preserves the precious treasure of the Spirit of GOD in the soul, the abundance of words

[1] S. James i. 26. [2] Eccles. x. 14.
[3] Prov. x. 19.

dissipates and extinguishes it. "A man that hath no rule over his own spirit," saith the HOLY SPIRIT, "resembles a city that is broken down and without walls."[1] Speak little, therefore, if thou wilt be collected in soul.

2ndly. *By motions of the heart towards* GOD. Acquire the holy habit of offering up during the day, and in the night if thou awakest, what are called *ejaculatory prayers.* Nothing will so much contribute to maintain thee in collectedness of soul. Such as, for instance, "My GOD, I love Thee with my whole heart. My GOD, I accept this affront, this humiliation, this sickness, for the love of Thee. LORD, when shall I love Thee as Thou meritest?" &c., &c.

CHAPTER VII.

OF THE ARDENT DESIRE OF THE SAINTS UNDER THE OLD DISPENSATION FOR THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH.

"Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation."—Isaiah xlv. 8.

"Send ye the Lamb to the ruler of the land."—Isaiah xvi. 1.

"Grant us Thy salvation."—Psalm lxxxv. 7.

EVER since GOD in His mercy had promised a SAVIOUR to man, who had fallen into sin and was condemned to hell, the saints and prophets of the Old Testament ceased not to address to heaven their vows and their prayers, in order to hasten His coming. "Look down," did they exclaim, "from heaven, and behold from the habitation of

[1] Prov. xxv. 28.

Thy holiness and of Thy glory: where is Thy zeal and Thy strength, the sounding of Thy bowels and of Thy mercies towards me? are they restrained?"[1] "Remember, O LORD, what is come upon us: consider, and behold our reproach. . . . . Servants have ruled over us: there is none that doth deliver us out of their hand."[2] We have become the sport of our passions, and our enemies have made a game of abusing our weakness. LORD, wilt Thou forget us for ever, and will the Deliverer never come, Whom Thou didst so solemnly promise to us? "O LORD my GOD, incline Thine ear and hear: open Thine eyes and behold our desolations. O LORD, hearken and do: defer not, for Thine own sake."[3]

Such were the longings of the patriarchs, and how ardent were their sighs! with what eagerness desired they the coming of the Messiah! with what impatience waited they for Him! What would they not have done to please that Divine SAVIOUR, might they have had the happiness to see Him? With what earnestness would they not have sought to prove to Him their love? with what fervour would they not have thanked Him for all the favours which He came to bring them?

And we Christians, who have the presence of JESUS CHRIST, we, before whose eyes the LORD of Life is set forth evidently crucified, we, who are surrounded with tokens of His tenderness, loaded with His benefits, bathed with His Blood, what is our conduct? "Be astonished, O ye heavens!"[4] It is but seldom we think of all that JESUS has done for love of us! scarcely do we love this tender and loving Friend! What do I say? It seems to

[1] Isa. lxiii. 15.
[2] Lam. v. passim.
[3] Dan. ix. 18, 19.
[4] Jer. ii. 12.

us that we have done some great thing, when in return for all His benefits we do not force Him to receive from us disdain and outrage. Oh! let us then cease to be ungrateful, and let us at least love our LORD as much as we can possibly love Him. If we love Him little, let us at least desire to love Him much: good desires, when sincere, please the LORD, Who never fails to fulfil them: for "blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. . . . He hath filled the hungry with good things: He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness."[1] Yes, let us greatly desire to love JESUS: but let us take heed that our desires resemble not those of the slothful. The slothful man maintains, indeed, in his heart the desire to love JESUS, his SAVIOUR: unhappily he rests contented with this barren desire which stays him,[2] and he does nothing further. The desire of the slothful killeth him, for his hands refuse to labour. As for us, let us not imitate him; let us love our good Master, not with our lips and in words, but in heart and in deed: let us be faithful to all the duties of the state in which Providence has placed us, and when for love of JESUS we shall have fulfilled them all with exactitude, let us then wish we could do more, in order to please Him more. This is real desire: often in the sight of GOD it has the value of the act itself. "O that Thou wouldst rend the heavens," cried the prophet Isaiah, "that Thou wouldst come down, that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence: as when the fire burneth, the fire causeth the water to boil."[3] Yes, LORD, when men shall see Thee come down on earth for

[1] Wisd. vii. 7; S. Matth. v. 6; S. Luke i. 53; Ps. cvii. 9.
[2] Prov. xxi. 25.
[3] Isaiah lxiv. 1, 2.

love of them, the mountains shall become level; that is, men, in order to serve Thee, shall overcome all those difficulties and obstacles which before seemed to them like inaccessible mountains. The waters shall boil, that is to say, the most frigid souls shall feel themselves at the sight of GOD made man, warmed as it were with the fire of Thy love. This prophetic speech has been verified in the beatified souls of so many saints, in particular of S. Mary Magdalen, of S. Ignatius the Martyr, of S. Augustin, and of a great number of others, who while on earth were consumed by this sacred fire. But alas! how few are such souls in comparison of the almost infinite multitude of those who remain insensible to the tenderness of our GOD, and who will not respond thereto!

My gracious LORD! I too will be of the number of those few souls who are consumed by the love of Thee. Alas! I ought to have been already for these many years burning in hell, separated from Thee for ever, and in the awful necessity of hating and cursing Thee, throughout eternity. But Thy mercy has ever watched over me: in the midst of my disorderly life Thou hast suffered me with wonderful patience, in order to behold me one day consumed, not by that avenging fire in which the damned burn, but by the gentle fire, by the blessed flames, of Thy holy love. For this end it is that Thou hast sent me so many beams of light, that Thou hast lavished on me so many good inspirations, so many desires for conversion when I lived far from Thee: for this end it is that Thou hast put forth every power of Thy tenderness for me, that Thou hast drawn me by Thy goodness and Thy loveliness, and that Thou hast done everything to win to Thyself my heart. O my GOD, this poor heart is wholly

diseased, wholly covered with the leprosy of its sins; and nevertheless Thou demandest it of me. Behold it then, O my GOD! I give it Thee, take it Thyself, and make it whole: I will that it be for ever Thine, for ever and ever. But alas! I know my fickleness and my weakness: Thou alone, my sweet LORD, Thou alone canst keep me close unto Thyself, and give me strength to remain constantly faithful to Thee: I firmly hope for this grace from Thy infinite goodness. And how, O my GOD! shall I yet again have the cowardice to forsake Thee, and to live a single instant without Thy love? Teach me to love Thee, O my JESUS! more than anything in the world, with all my soul, with all my strength: alas, it is always too little. Graciously hear me, O LORD CHRIST. Amen.

Practical Resolutions.

OF THE DESIRE OF PERFECTION.

Stir up to-day in thy heart the love and desire of perfection and of holiness, for this is the basis of our spiritual advancement, since the HOLY SPIRIT teaches us that "the very true beginning of her is the desire of discipline."[1] Say often in the course of the day: "My LORD, cause me to hunger and thirst after Thy righteousness." Oh, how happy wilt thou be when thou shalt feel within thyself this ardent desire to advance more and more in the path of virtue! How happy wilt thou be when all thy thoughts turn as it were naturally towards the means to be taken to become even more perfect! Yes, thou wilt be happy, for thou wilt possess a well-

[1] Wisd. vi. 17.

assured pledge of the presence of GOD in thy heart. This is the sentiment of S. Bernard, and he proves it by these words of the wise man: "They that eat me shall yet be hungry, and they that drink me shall yet be thirsty."[1] If then thou hast this hunger and thirst for thy spiritual advancement, rejoice, for it is an evident sign that GOD makes His abode in thy soul: He it is Who causes this hunger and thirst. Give all thy care to excite it more and more each day, for GOD satisfies the longing soul with goodness.[2] But if thou feel not this desire of perfection, this desire for an ever-increasing holiness, be afraid: "thou walkest in darkness, and exposest thyself to fall into the precipices which thou hast not perceived."[3] However it may be, do thine actions to-day as though thou shouldst die to-night: little or great, agreeable or wearisome, easy or troublesome, humble or exalted, let each have for its principle the love of GOD and His greater glory. By this means thou wilt obtain the desire for perfection, and thou wilt increase it by much, if already thou possessest it.

CHAPTER VIII.

INCARNATION OF OUR LORD.

"And the Word was made flesh."—S. John i. 14.

THE times were fulfilled, and GOD was about to manifest to men the full extent of His love for them. The Redeemer so long wished for, so ardently desired, so impatiently waited for, that Redeemer, the object of so

[1] Ecclus. xxiv. 21. [2] Ps. cvii. 9. [3] Prov. iv. 19.

many longings and sighs, was about to come. All was in readiness for the Incarnation of the Word. The Angel Gabriel is sent on earth by the King of kings. He traverses space with the speed of lightning, directs himself towards a small town of Judea, called Nazareth, and presents himself with deep respect to a young virgin, poor and unknown by the world, but modest, humble, chaste and spotless, and the Virgin's name was Mary.[1]

"And the angel came in unto her and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured (or full of grace,) the LORD is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favour with GOD. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and shalt call His name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the SON of the Highest: and the LORD GOD shall give unto Him the throne of His father David. And He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The HOLY GHOST shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the SON of GOD. And, behold, thy cousin Elizabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For with GOD nothing shall be impossible. And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the LORD: be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her."

[1] S. Luke i. 26, 27.

O marvel, which transported with admiration heaven and all nature! The Word made flesh! GOD made man! What should we say if we beheld an earthly king, who had taken the form of a worm, to save by his own death the life of a mean small worm? We should not find words to express our astonishment. That is, however, what JESUS, the Sovereign Monarch of heaven and earth, our Creator and our GOD, has done for us. What do I say? He has gone much further: for after all, between a worm and the greatest king on earth, great as the distance is, yet there is a distance, and that not infinite; whereas, between GOD and man, GOD and a king, GOD and the whole universe, there is no measure of distance which can be conceived. And, nevertheless, O marvel! GOD made Himself man, GOD is man, and will be for ever man! Oh, if we knew what GOD is, if we could comprehend the greatness of His Majesty, we should, when we speak of the Incarnation, when we pronounce the sacred Name of JESUS, which expresses it, when we say with the Church: *The Word was made flesh, Verbum caro factum est*, we should, I say, prostrate ourselves, should desire to humble ourselves to the depths of the earth, to engulf ourselves in the centre of nothingness, in order to render becoming reverence to so great a mystery.

The Word was made flesh. O love incomprehensible of GOD for us! O LORD, how exceeding is Thy tenderness! As GOD, Thou couldst not die, and behold Thou didst vouchsafe to become man, subject to death, in order that Thou mightest give Thy life for the love of us. Thou wast the SON of GOD, exclaims S. Augustine, and Thou madest Thyself the Son of Man, in order to raise us, who were nought, to the sublime dignity of children of GOD;

Thou hast willed to share our woes, in order that Thou mightest make us sharers in Thy good things. O good LORD, be Thou for ever blessed and praised, for that infinite love in which Thou hast dealt with us.

"But," says the Apostle, "that which displays the love of GOD towards us far more still, that which should incite us powerfully to gratitude, is that while we were yet sinners, JESUS CHRIST withheld not Himself from becoming incarnate, and from dying for us."[1]

We were His enemies, and He did that for us which we should never have dared to ask, had we even been His friends. Who, exclaims S. Gregory, does not admire this great mercy of our GOD? We were not worthy to be His slaves, and behold He treats us as His friends. "He comes," adds S. Maximus, Bishop, "He comes from the height of heaven to this earth of exile and of tears, in order to bring us with Him into the abode of eternal happiness." Who could resist such a love? Who could withhold his heart from a GOD Who loves with so much tenderness? What more proper to inflame our souls with Divine love than the sight of a GOD Who makes Himself man for the love of us, even when we were His most cruel enemies? "Ah," exclaims the pious Thomas à Kempis, "if JESUS CHRIST is so good towards His enemies, what will He not be to His friends?" to those who love Him and serve Him with their whole hearts?

O GOD! since Thou hast thus given Thyself wholly to me, with so great a goodness, cause, I beseech Thee, that I myself be at length wholly Thine. Fill me in Thy love, that I may learn to taste in the depth of my heart, how sweet it is to love Thee, and to be dissolved in Thy love.

[1] Rom. v. 8.

May love seize me and raise me above myself by its transports of fervour. Oh, that I may sing the canticle of love! May all the powers of my soul exhaust themselves in praising Thee, and may she faint with joy and love. O my LORD, may I love Thee with all my heart in this valley of tears; in order that I may one day love Thee perfectly and for ever in that bright heaven whither Thy goodness calls me. The mystery of the Incarnation is not only a prodigy of love, it is a prodigy of humiliation. Him, Whom millions of angels adore in heaven, repeating unceasingly, "Holy, holy, holy, LORD GOD of Hosts: heaven and earth are full of the Majesty of Thy Glory:" Him Whom the earth, seas, heavenly bodies revere and adore: Him Whom all things obey, and Who governs all things; behold Him enclosed in the womb of a virgin: He feels thereof neither shame nor detestation. O humiliation the more astounding, because there is an infinite distance between the divine and human nature. Let us then exclaim—"O JESUS, verily Thou art a GOD that hidest Thyself."[1] It is too little to say, Thou art a GOD humbled, a GOD eclipsed, a GOD annihilated.[2] Terms quite new are needed to be able to express a prodigy of humility, thus wonderful.

Let man, whosoever he may be, dust and ashes, nothingness and sin, raise himself up after this; let him exhibit himself, let him value himself, let him strive for the first ranks, let him be ambitious for distinguished places; let him murmur that he was not born with more nobility, more power, more natural talents. Let him also have a repugnance to endure to be considered by others, as contemptible, ignorant, imprudent, or vicious, when JESUS

[1] Isa. xlv. 15. [2] Phil. ii. 7, 8.

CHRIST willed to appear on earth poor, weak, and annihilated for the love of us.

JESUS remained during nine months in the womb of Mary, His mother, and it was in that prison that this GOD, Greatness and Wisdom itself, remained hidden and unknown to the whole world. What a lesson for us! This Divine SAVIOUR willed to act thus, in order to teach us to moderate that natural desire which we have to be seen, and to be willing to pass our lives in that little corner of the earth, in those low and abject duties, where our talents appear neglected, and where no one thinks of us. He willed to humble and annihilate Himself to this degree, GOD as He was, in order that our pride should not hold it unworthy of us to walk in the steps of a GOD. O my LORD, suffer not that I should ever yield to the spirit of pride. Would it not be rashness inconceivable, if after beholding Thee thus humbled, a worm such as I am, should seek to raise itself, and be seen? LORD JESUS, suffer it not, I beseech Thee.

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED: My son, hearken to the voice of thy GOD, thus humbled for the love of thee. If pride arise in thy heart and cry to thee, "Make thyself known to the world: thou couldst do more good in such another position, in such and such a place, in this or that office, in yonder exalted post, thou art not wanting in talent for all that," listen not to such words; they are the hissings of the infernal serpent. Learn to serve Me, as I will thou shouldst serve Me. If I will that thou walk in My footsteps, in being scorned or overlooked by men, in leading a hidden life, in the fulfilment of low and inferior duties; if I will that thou honour Me rather by the loss and inutility of thy talents, than by the vain-glorious

use thou wouldst make of them, wilt thou dare to say to Me, "Wherefore actest Thou thus?" "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?"[1]

O My son, love to live unknown, and to be accounted as nothing. Never esteem thyself better than others, lest perhaps thou be worse in the sight of GOD, Who knows what is in man. Thou riskest nothing in placing thyself below all others; but it would be injurious to thee to prefer thyself before one only. The humble man enjoys an undisturbed peace: but anger and jealousy trouble the heart of the proud. GOD protects the humble man and delivers him: He loves the humble and comforts him, stoops to him, and dispenses His favours to him, and after his humiliation, raises him to glory. My son, think not to have made any advance in My love, if thou esteem not thyself less than all others.

LORD JESUS, uproot from my heart, I beseech Thee, that pride which reigns there like a tyrant, and implant in its stead holy humility, that lovely grace of which in Thine Incarnation Thou givest me such an example. That man should be proud with all the reason he has to abase himself, is a very deplorable misfortune; but that a GOD should have humbled Himself for us, even to become man, is a mercy at which we cannot sufficiently wonder.

O JESUS, might I profit by this great mercy! might I profit by the lesson Thou teachest me! Vouchsafe to render me humble, for without Thee I cannot be so.

[1] Rom. ix. 20, 21.

Give me humility, and above all Thy holy love. Oh, my gentle Redeemer, in beholding all the favours with which Thou hast loaded me, the immense love which Thou hast shown to me, how is it that I expire not with pain and regret at having been so ungrateful! Thou hast come down from heaven to seek me, poor strayed sheep, and I have so many times driven Thee far from me, so many times preferred unworthy pleasures to Thee. O my LORD! since Thou wilt possess me, I will abandon all; I will be Thine, and I will have Thee alone. I choose Thee for the only object of my affections: *Dilectus meus mihi et ego illi;* Thou thinkest upon me, I will therefore think only of Thee. Cause me to love Thee always, and never more to have the unhappiness to reject Thy affection. Provided I love Thee, I willingly consent to be deprived of all sensible consolation, and even to suffer every kind of trial. I know, LORD, Thou desirest that I should be wholly Thine: then will I belong to Thee entirely and without reserve. I know that all in this world is but illusion, deception, smoke, mire, and vanity. Thou alone art the true and only good, Thou alone therefore shalt suffice to me. My GOD, I desire to possess Thee only, and nothing more. Oh come into my poor heart; with Thee I fear nothing, with Thee I am rich, with Thee I am strong, with Thee I am that which Thou wilt have me to be. Even so, come, LORD JESUS. Amen.

Practical Resolutions.

OF HUMILITY.

The Word was made flesh! Behold an instance of humility, able, by the aid of Divine grace, to cure our

pride; let us profit thereby. Without humility there is no solid Christian virtue worthy of heaven; without humility it is impossible to walk long together in the straight way. "Wouldst thou know," says S. Augustine, "what is the first virtue of a Christian who aims at perfection? The first virtue is humility; the second is humility; the third is humility, and ever humility." This virtue is the solid foundation, and the guardian of all others. As "pride is the beginning of all kinds of sin," so is humility the source of virtues: this is that which nourishes, protects, and supports them. "The man who without it seeks to acquire virtues, does no more," says S. Gregory, "than throw dust to the wind." If this grace of humility totters, all the rest will before long come to ruin. With humility we become like the angels, whereas pride has changed angels into devils.

See now, my dear Theotime,[1] the idea thou shouldst form to thyself of humility, its importance and necessity: see with what earnestness thou shouldst set thyself to acquire this virtue. The means of doing so are these: first ask it of GOD unceasingly, because He alone can endow us with so precious a gift; secondly, think often upon thy past sins and thy present miseries, for there is doubtless in these cause to humble thyself; thirdly, patiently suffer thyself to be despised, to be humbled, and that none should notice thee. "Without humiliations," says S. Bonaventure, "we cannot arrive at humility." Such is likewise the sentiment of S. Bernard: "humiliation," says he, "is the road to humility. Consequently,

[1] The expression Theotime, which means one who honours GOD, is used throughout the book as an impersonation of the reader.—ED.

if thou desirest to be humble, enter into the path of humiliation; for if thou wilt not be humbled, thou wilt never have humility." Accept, then, with resignation, if not with joy, all the humiliations which are so often to be met with in the intercourse of life, and turn them to thy profit. Fourthly, seek not to be seen, for the truly humble man loves to be unknown. Entertain a low opinion of thyself, of thy talents, thy lights, and esteem thyself the least of all. All this is doubtless very difficult, but be not discouraged, JESUS will be with thee. Do all thine actions this day with the intention of obtaining humility. Pray for those who have humbled thee, and who are perhaps still seeking for opportunity to do so; yea, pray for them, for they do thee a great service. Above all, go not forth to evaporate in complaints against them: thou wilt lose the fruit of thy humiliations: suffer, forgive, and forget. Let thy humility be sincere: a feigned and disguised humility is nothing else than a diabolical pride. Be humble, not in order to appease, not to win the esteem of men, but because thou knowest that humility is pleasing to the heart of our good LORD. Be humble, but seek not to persuade thyself that thou art so. I well know it would be consoling to be able to say within ourselves with truth: "At length I have obtained humility; I possess it." Nevertheless beware! self-love glides in everywhere, and would rob thee even of thy humility. I repeat to thee, therefore, be humble, that is to say, do all that is needful to become so, and then cast thyself with entire confidence upon the heart of thy LORD. He who will preserve in his soul the precious treasure of humility, must hide it carefully from the eyes of others, and from himself.

CHAPTER IX.

The Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Stable of Bethlehem.

"But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men."—Phil. ii. 7.

An extraordinary event is in preparation. The world is about to witness a great and novel spectacle, a mystery it will not comprehend, a marvel of humility and love, which through all eternity, will be the theme of angels and saints in heaven. A God, made man, is about to be born upon earth. Holy angels in Paradise, and ye, inhabitants of earth, haste ye to prepare for this Divine Child a palace and a cradle fit for His High Majesty. Haste . . . . but whither do I wander? . . . . O my God, how wondrous are Thy counsels! O how distant are Thy thoughts from those of men. Our Redeemer "came unto His own, and His own received Him not."[1] Very far from having a palace at His disposal, there was not even room found for Him when He arrived.[2] The rich of the earth had filled the inns; for Jesus there is left nothing but a deserted empty stable; in this palace He will be born, and a poor manger is to be His cradle.

Is it possible? Behold! the only-begotten Son of the Almighty God, very God with His Father, is become an Infant, and lies on a little straw in a cave! O how true is the saying, "He made Himself of no reputation." A God in a stable! Solomon, the wisest of

[1] S. John i. 11. [2] S. Luke ii. 7.

kings, employed seven years in erecting a temple to the glory of GOD's Name; silver, gold, and precious stones, shone therein in every part; and in no place before was ever seen so great a splendour, nor so wonderful a profusion of riches; and when he had completed it, that great king exclaimed, "But will GOD in very deed dwell with men on the earth? Behold, heaven, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee, how much less this house which I have built."[1] Such was the language of Solomon. O Christians! I ask ye, when we behold our GOD born in the stable of Bethlehem, and lying in a manger, does it not belong to us in reverence to contemplate the fact, that the great King of heaven and earth wills to be born in a stable, and that for the love of us?

O my LORD JESUS, my tender Friend, can I possibly strive again to exalt myself, who am dust and ashes, after that Thou hast humbled Thyself to such a degree? Assuredly not. I will labour with my whole heart to become sincerely humble, because I know Thou lovest humility: I will from this day set my hand to the work. Do Thou, O my kind Master, assist me, sustain my weakness, and shed abundantly in my heart the balm of Thy pure love; it alone can heal the deep wounds which pride and other passions have inflicted therein. Oh, in mercy refuse it me not. "Heal my soul, for I have sinned against Thee."

Let us suppose that we know not Who that poor Infant is, Whom we behold in the stable at Bethlehem, and let us interrogate Faith; she will reply to us—It is the SON of GOD, Himself very GOD. Yes, this Infant so weak, so poor, so mean in appearance, is He Himself, "Who hath

[1] 2 Chron. vi. 18.

laid the foundations of the earth; He it is that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers, that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in.[1] He it is Whose power is infinite, Who is to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him: of Whom the heavens shall praise the wonders, and Who is greatly to be feared in the Assembly of the Saints: Who ruleth the raging of the sea; when the waves thereof arise, He stilleth them:[2] Who hath prepared His throne in the heavens, and His Kingdom ruleth over all."[3] He has just been born in a stable, and nevertheless "the heavens are His, the earth also is His."[4] He is lying in a narrow crib, which can scarcely contain Him, and yet He fills heaven and earth,[5] with His immensity. He is an infant of a day, and yet He is the GOD of all eternity.[6] He is clothed with a few mean and tattered rags, and yet He it is Who gives to the flowers their attire, and to nature all its charms. O man, knowest thou what reduced Him to a state thus miserable and humiliating? It was the immense love which He bears to us; how few Christians there are who respond to that affection!

My soul, let the example of thy GOD, born in a stable, destitute of all things, teach thee to love poverty: let the cold which He endures with so much patience, teach thee to love mortification: let the tears which He sheds for thy sins, teach thee how to weep for them thyself. Ah, it cost Him a word only to draw thee out of nothing, and

[1] Isa. xl. 21, 22.
[2] Ps. lxxxix. 7, 5, 9.
[3] Ps. ciii. 19.
[4] Ps. lxxxix. 11; Ps. xlix. 12.
[5] Jer. xxiii. 24.
[6] Ps. xc. 2, "From everlasting to everlasting, Thou art GOD."

lo, in order to redeem thee He suffers, weeps, and moans. Soon He will shed His Blood to the last drop. Mayest thou comprehend by the greatness of the remedy, how deep and difficult to be healed were the wounds with which sin had covered thee. Mayest thou realise the ardour of thy SAVIOUR'S love for thee. Mayest thou love Him with all thy strength, and as much as is possible unto thee to love Him. O my LORD JESUS, it is then true that Thou wast born in a stable, in the depth of the most utter poverty! It is then true that Thou didst pass all Thy life in sufferings, to make me comprehend the love which Thou hast for me! It is then likewise true, that I am an ungrateful creature, have passed all my days in contempt of Thee, and in deeply grieving Thee with my sins. O, I beseech Thee, give me to understand the greatness of the evil I have committed, and of the love which Thou deservest. And since Thou hast graciously borne with me until now, cause me to return to Thee without the least further delay, and suffer me not for the future to incur the misery of grieving Thee again. Kindle within me wholly the fire of Thy holy love, and grant me the grace to remember for ever all Thou hast suffered for me, in order that henceforth I forget all creatures, and think of nothing else but to love and please Thee. Thou camest on earth to reign by love in our hearts; take away then, and uproot from mine all which prevents Thy entire possession of it. Make Thy will to be likewise mine, and to become the rule of all my actions and desires. Yea, O my GOD, give me the grace to fulfil Thy holy Will in all things, everywhere and always, and unreservedly to sacrifice my will to Thee, whatever it may cost me. Suffer not that I should ever deserve the reproach Thou didst address

to the Jews by the mouth of Thy Prophet. "To what purpose is the multitude of your (fasts and) your sacrifices unto Me? I am weary to bear them. Your incense is an abomination unto Me. Your pretended good works I reject, because they are the fruit of your self-will."[1] O my GOD, I beseech Thee, "teach me to do Thy holy Will,"[2] and give me grace to fulfil it to my latest breath. Amen.

Practical Resolutions.

OF THE ESTEEM AND LOVE OF POVERTY.

Happy they who possess riches, happy they who can withdraw themselves from the humiliations and privations of poverty. So speaks the world. My GOD, how different is the language of JESUS CHRIST—"Woe unto you that are rich,"[3] exclaimed He; "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven."[4] On which side is truth? on which side is happiness? Oh, there is no doubt upon which when JESUS CHRIST has spoken it.

My dear Theotime, either thou art rich in this world's good, or thou art poor. If thou possessest riches, be careful to withdraw thy heart therefrom; otherwise it is to thee that JESUS says, "Woe unto you that are rich." Use thy fortune, as not abusing it; possess it, as though thou hadst it not. Shed upon the poor thine alms in abundance; comfort the widow and the orphan.

[1] Isa. i. 11, 13, 14. "Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and Thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our souls, and Thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours." (Isa. lviii. 3.)

[2] Ps. cxliii. 10. [3] S. Luke vi. 24. [4] S. Matth. v. 3.

Pass not this day without performing some act of charity; there are so many poor and unhappy, if the rich knew but how to use their treasures, what good might they not do?

If thou art poor, beware of murmuring against Providence; forget not that thy SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST has shed over the poor a Divine brightness. He Himself was poor; He was born poor, lived poor, died poor. Envy not the rich their immense possessions. Alas, these are far from rendering them happy. Content thyself with what little thou hast, and raise thine eyes to heaven; there, if thou wilt, shall be thy dominions; there thy palaces, thy treasures. In order to that, suffer with patience the privations of thy state, and say, not to-day only, but always, and on all occasions, "My GOD, it is Thy Will that I should be poor, that I suffer; Thy holy Name be blest; Thy Will be done. Only give me Thy love, and I shall be rich."

CHAPTER X.

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST WILLED TO BE BORN AN INFANT, THEREBY TO EXCITE US TO MORE CONFIDENCE AND LOVE FOR HIM.

"To us a Child is born, to us a SON is given."—Isa. ix. 6.

THE reason for which the SON of GOD willed to be born an Infant, was in order thereby to adapt Himself to the capacity of each period of man's life, and conciliate our love more easily. "And wherefore," asks S. Francis de Sales, "does JESUS take upon Himself the sweet and

lovely condition of childhood, if it be not to draw us to love and trust in Him?" S. Peter Chrysologus had said the same before him; "God willed to be born an Infant because He would be loved."

Our Lord Jesus Christ, writes the pious Guerricus, ardently desires that we should love Him, with that self-surrender with which generous children love the best of fathers: He cannot endure that we should fear Him as slaves dread a severe and cruel master. It was for this, that when He manifested Himself to men He did not appear with a preparation of power and majesty, which might cause them to tremble: He preferred to appear under the form of an Infant, because He came to save, and to make Himself beloved, and not to judge and to make Himself feared. Let us then go now with confidence to cast ourselves before the throne of His mercy, we who formerly dared not even think upon His throne of glory, without feeling a religious dread. In the stable of Bethlehem there is nothing to inspire terror, all there breathes of mercy and love. Jesus is there full of gentleness: He knows not what it is to be irritated when offended, or if irritated, is easily appeased.

Lord Jesus, blessed Saviour of my soul, in what is my confidence in this life, and my most sweet consolation in the midst of all that offers itself to my view, beneath the heaven? Is it not in Thee, O Lord my God, Whose mercy is infinite? Where has it been well with me without Thee, and with Thee, where has it been ill? I would rather be poor for Thy sake, than rich without Thee. I would rather be a pilgrim upon earth with Thee, than possess heaven without Thee; where Thou art, there is heaven; and death and hell are, where Thou

art not. Thou art all my desire; and this is wherefore, while far from Thee, I can but sigh, lament, and pray. I can fully confide in none but Thee, nor can I in my necessities, hope in aught but in Thee alone, O my GOD! Thou art my hope, my confidence, my ever faithful Comforter. . . . . My eyes are raised towards Thee; in Thee I place all my confidence, O my GOD. Sanctify my soul, bless it with Thy heavenly benediction, that it may become Thy sacred abode, the seat of Thy eternal glory, and that in this temple where Thou disdainest not to dwell, there may be nothing offensive to Thy sight. "Hear me, O LORD, for Thy loving-kindness is good; turn unto me according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies,"[1] hear the prayer of Thy miserable servant, exiled far from Thee in the region of darkness and death. Protect and preserve the soul of Thy poor servant, in the midst of the dangers of this corruptible life; may Thy grace accompany and conduct it, in the path of peace, into the home of everlasting light. O JESUS! Child JESUS, my kind LORD, I await this grace from Thy mercy.

S. Francis, of Assisium, was transported with admiration and love when he spoke of the mystery of the Birth of the SON of GOD. S. Bernard experienced the same feelings: let us hear him speak. A voice of joy, says he, has just been heard in this world of exile, a voice of joy and gladness in the dwellings of sinners! a speech worthy of all men to be recorded, full of sweetness and consolation, has struck upon our ears. Sing unto the LORD, O ye mountains, and make His praise to resound. Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the field be joyful, and all that is therein; then shall all the trees

[1] Ps. lxix. 16, 17.

of the wood rejoice before the LORD, for He cometh into the midst of us. Hear, O ye heavens; give ear, O earth, and thou above all, O man! Be astonished: JESUS CHRIST, *the* SON *of* GOD, *is born in Bethlehem of Judea.* Where is the heart so hard and insensible, that words so sweet would fail to soften? What more comfortable news could be announced to us? Has the world ever heard words so sweet? JESUS CHRIST, *the* SON *of* GOD, *is born in Bethlehem of Judea.* With what heavenly blessedness are they not replete? I would I could cause their sweetness and their power to be perceived; but terms fail me, and I fear to weaken them, by making the least alteration therein; JESUS CHRIST, the SON of GOD, *is born in Bethlehem of Judea.* O wonderful Birth! . . O all ye who are in the dust, arise and adore JESUS born; He comes to save you, to heal you, to cover you with glory. O ye sinners, ye poor strayed sheep, begin to breathe again; JESUS comes on earth to seek and to save that which is lost. O ye who are sick, take courage; JESUS comes to heal your contrite hearts with the unction of His mercy. O all ye who nurture in your souls the desire to attain to high dignity, rejoice: the SON of GOD comes down towards you to cause you to share His kingdom. Go to the manger, go fearlessly to find Him: when He is on the throne of His greatness and His majesty, He commands fear and respect, but here He displays Himself in the form of a little Child, and inspires confidence and love. The Eyes of JESUS bathed in tears, could they fail to move thee? This Divine SAVIOUR weeps, but not like other children, nor for the same reason. Ordinary children cry from necessity and weakness, JESUS cries from compassion and love for us.

"*To us a Child is born: to us a Son is given.*" Let us go to His manger, and listen with reverence to all the instructions which He will vouchsafe to address to us. His tongue cannot yet articulate words, but all the members of His infant Body are as so many mouths to cry to us; Thou shalt love the LORD thy GOD, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind:[1] Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted:[2] Sit down in the lowest room:[3] Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted:[4] Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:[5] One thing is needful,[6] and this one thing needful is thy salvation: What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?[7]

My gracious JESUS, how beautiful are Thine instructions! how wonderful are they! Fain would I fulfil them for the love of Thee! but alas! I am so weak, so feeble, that I can do nothing right. O Child JESUS, have pity upon me. I wish to love Thee, Thou knowest Who seest the depth of my heart: grant me then Thy holy love. O how sweet it would be to me to love Thee as the Blessed Virgin and all the saints love Thee! O how happy should I be, could I make all men love Thee! At least, O my LORD, I have the most lively and ardent de-

[1] S. Matth. xxii. 37.
[2] S. Matth. v. 4.
[3] S. Luke xiv. 10.
[4] S. Luke xiv. 11.
[5] S. Matth. vi. 19, 20.
[6] S. Luke x. 43.
[7] S. Matth. xvi. 26.

sire to do so: deign, I beseech Thee, to accept this, the desire of my heart.

"*To us a Child is born: to us a Son is given.*" The Eternal is become a Child, the Almighty has made Himself feeble: He Who is infinite and independent has subjected Himself to His own creatures: He has humbled Himself even to become man, and be born in a stable: and it is His love for us which has made Him work all these marvels. "O love!" cries a good man, "O most mighty triumph of love! thou hast conquered the invincible: the All-powerful is become a captive. O excess of love indeed!" A GOD become an infant! a GOD an infant for love of us! an infant to inspire us with confidence! an infant the better to win our heart! Let us then love this good and gracious GOD, and in order to excite us to love Him ever more and more, let us never be weary of repeating, and each time with a new effusion of love and joy, these touching words: "*To us a Child is born, to us a Son is given.*"

O my holy LORD, once a gentle Child, I love Thee and trust in Thee: yes, Thou art my hope and my love. Oh! what would have become of me, hadst Thou not come down from heaven to save me? Already the offences of which I have been guilty towards Thee, had long since made me a prey to the flames of hell. For ever praised be Thy mercy, that Thou art yet ready to forgive me, if I repent of my sins! O my LORD! Thou readest the depths of my heart, and Thou seest how I repent of having so greatly offended Thee. Receive me into Thy favour and cause me to die to myself, in order to live only unto Thee, my only good. Destroy all that which is displeasing in Thine eyes, and take possession of all my affections.

Practical Resolutions.

LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOUR.

"If a man say, I love GOD, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love GOD, Whom he hath not seen?"[1] Notwithstanding these words of S. John, many there are who yet delude themselves greatly. They are hard-hearted to the poor: they love slander: they pardon with difficulty a slight offence: they despise others: and because they repeat frequently, "My GOD, I love Thee!" they believe themselves safe. Do not imitate their conduct, but love all men as thy brethren, as creatures upon whom the Image of GOD is impressed. Desire earnestly the salvation of all. Show to all, and chiefly to thine enemies, to those who persecute thee, a gentle and serene aspect. Let thy mouth utter only words of peace, and let the unction of a holy charity temper in thee all bitterness of heart. Be ever ready to succour and console thy brethren, and filled with compassion for the afflicted and for sinners. Rejoice in the virtues of others, as though they were thine own: feel their misery as thine own: transforming thyself, so to speak, into each of them. Despise no one. Carefully reject rash judgments, and suspicious disadvantages to thy neighbour. Accustom thyself to think well of every one. Interpret favourably, with a simple heart, the words and actions of others.

Oh what a beautiful virtue is charity to our neighbour; but alas, how rare is this virtue! Enter into the depth of thy heart, and see how far thou possessest it. Art

[1] 1 S. John iv. 30.

thou sincerely disposed to pardon all thine enemies, and even to do them good? Dost thou not love to criticise on all occasions the conduct of thy neighbour? I repeat, probe thy heart in this matter. Love thy brethren as thou lovest thyself; that is what our LORD JESUS CHRIST demands of thee: wouldst thou refuse Him so just a thing? Let not this day pass without taking the necessary means to be able to say to-night, in lying down to sleep, and with truth: "My GOD, I love Thee with my whole heart, and I love my neighbour as myself, for the love of Thee."

CHAPTER XI.

ON THE HIDDEN LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST, AND HIS HUMBLE SUBMISSION TO MARY AND JOSEPH.

"And was subject unto them."—S. Luke ii. 51.

CHRISTIANS, let us transport ourselves into the cottage of Nazareth, into the humble abode of Mary and Joseph. There, our eyes will be struck by a spectacle worthy of all our admiration; there we shall see our LORD JESUS, subjecting Himself, for love of us, to His creatures, and doing nothing else until the age of thirty, but obeying them. "And was subject unto them." "I am struck with astonishment at these words," exclaims Bossuet. "Is that then the sole employment of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, the SON of GOD? All His occupation, all His exertion, is to obey two of His creatures. And obey them in what? In the meanest exercises, in the practice of a mechanical

craft. Where are they who complain and murmur, when their employments are not adequate to their capacity, or to say more truly, to their pride? Let them come into the house of Joseph and Mary, and let them there behold JESUS CHRIST. . . . . O pride, be thou broken at this sight. JESUS, the Son of a carpenter, a Carpenter Himself, is known by this occupation, without being spoken of, as having any other office, or as performing any other action."

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE: O my LORD JESUS, it is thus then, that for love of my poor soul, and to destroy my pride, Thou hast been pleased to conceal Thyself for so long, and to hide from men's eyes all the treasures of Thy Divinity. O give me grace to love Thee with my whole heart, in gratitude for so beautiful a lesson.

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED: My son, I willed to teach thee by My example the real and solid greatness which lies in being virtuous without noise or ostentation, and in leading a dependent and hidden life. While I was living thus unknown at Nazareth, there were at Rome, and throughout the Roman Empire, famous orators, great captains, clever statesmen, renowned poets. The whole world resounded with their fame; their praises spread from mouth to mouth, and there were scarcely any who envied not their lot. Thinkest thou, my son, that GOD, in the height of heaven, said to the angels, while showing to them those slaves of vain renown, "Behold what celebrity they have acquired, behold with what glory they clothe themselves?" No, My child. GOD pointed out to them the cottage of Nazareth, and said to them, "Behold My SON! Behold how He obeys, to what a pass He humbles Himself, how much He loves men, how much

He loves Myself." It is not then pomp and splendour, it is not earthly riches or greatness which draw down the look and the consideration of GOD My FATHER. One may therefore be great according to this world, and very insignificant in the eyes of Him Who esteems things by their real worth. One may be therefore as pleasing to GOD in the lowest and meanest employments, as in the highest and most honourable offices. Learn hence to be contented in the humble state wherein I have placed thee, and beware of wishing for another in which to be less unknown, less forgotten, or less slighted. Always remember that it is infinitely better to remain hidden, and known only to Me, than to show thyself to the world.

"*And was subject unto them.*" O heaven! is it possible that He Who obeys with so much reverence Mary and Joseph, should be that great GOD Who governs all nature as LORD? Yes, and faith commands me to believe it. "It is to Him," says S. Bernard, "that all the angels are subject; it is He Whom Principalities and Powers obey, and yet He submits to Mary, and meekly fulfils her orders. Not only does He submit to Mary, but likewise to Joseph, because of Mary. Let us here admire two things, and let us choose between them that which should cause us the more astonishment, whether it be the profound lowliness of the SON, or the excellent dignity of the mother; but both are alike worthy of our veneration. That a GOD should obey a woman, is unexampled humility; that a woman should command a GOD, is dignity at once sublime and unequalled. Learn then, O mortal man, to obey. Learn, O dust and ashes, to submit. Learn to do what is commanded thee. Blush with shame, proud ashes. Thy GOD humbleth Himself, and thou darest to exalt thy-

self! Thy GOD submitteth Himself to men, and thou cherishest in thy heart the foolish desire to have dominion. Thou wouldst be at the head of others. Thou preferrest thyself to thy Creator. Yes, know this well, that every time thou hast a desire to domineer over thy brethren, thou esteemest thyself above GOD, and seekest to usurp His rights. O Christian, if thou, a mortal man, deemest it an indignity to imitate thy fellow-creature, yet it surely will not be a disgrace to thee to walk in the steps of thy Creator. If thou canst not follow Him whither He is exalted, yet follow Him at least in that to which He descended."

"*And was subject unto them.*" What a sublime lesson for us, who submit with so much difficulty to our superiors. Happy is he who will profit by it. Happy is he who will walk with faithfulness in the path of obedience to others. "The way of obedience," says Thomas à Kempis, "is that which conducts to heaven; likewise is there more safety in obeying than in commanding. The man who knows how to submit and obey, is ever in profound peace, and no one lives with more tranquillity, no one dies with more calm security, than he who has always obeyed." It is obedience alone which causes all virtues to spring up in the soul, both cultivating and preserving them. "Obedience," says Solomon, "is better than sacrifice;" for it offers to GOD our own will, which is incomparably more precious in His eyes than the flesh of beasts immolated to Him. Obedience is a victory gained over self, and a man has no more glorious triumph than in submitting his own will to that of a man like himself. Let us then suffer ourselves to be guided, if we sincerely desire to reach the haven: let not murmurs or bitter words ever escape us

against those persons under whose authority we have been placed; and let us be convinced that we deserve the lowest place, because all others have more virtues than we have ourselves.

"*And was subject unto them.*" He obeyed Mary and Joseph, up to the age of thirty, until the period when His Heavenly FATHER sent Him to preach the Gospel to the nations of Judea. What a subject of shame for so many ungrateful and unnatural children, who shake off with guilty haste the wholesome yoke of the obedience which they owe to the authors of their being.

"*And was subject unto them.*" Yes, He obeyed them in all things. The lowest offices in a poor household did not offend Him, so much had He at heart to prove to us by every possible means the greatness of His love for us. My gentle LORD, to what degradations didst Thou not condemn Thyself for my instruction. During thirty years Thou wast pleased to hide Thy Divinity beneath very ordinary outward appearances, in order to teach me to love a retired life, and to conceal under the veil of humility and silence, the graces which Thou mayest bestow on me. During thirty years, Thou didst remain unknown to the whole world, in order to teach me to love humility. During thirty years Thou didst submit to Thy own creatures, in order to break my pride, which will not submit, to teach me to obey with simplicity those whom Thou hast clothed with Thy authority. Forgive me, O my GOD, forgive me. I have ill profited by Thy example hitherto; but I will profit by it for the future; help me, O LORD.

O my LORD JESUS, give me grace to renounce my self-will, in order to follow no more any will but Thine. Give me grace to walk in Thy steps, and to seek after holy

humility, with yet more ardour than that, with which the ambitious of this world seek after its honours. Thou art the great GOD, the Sovereign LORD of heaven and earth, the GOD of Gods, King of Kings, and LORD of Lords, and Thou dost humble Thyself? I am but a worm of the earth, a vile nothing, and I set myself up. O my GOD, forgive my foolishness. I confess to Thee my miseries—I confess that I am a child of wrath, that "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."[1] I came into the world with the stain of sin, and death, which is the just punishment thereof, will speedily take me out of it. O good and merciful JESUS, have compassion upon me! my soul is like a sea, which my strong, ill-regulated passions and desires agitate incessantly. "My sins," O my GOD, "are more in number than the hairs of my head,"[2] and I deserve not to raise my eyes to heaven, by reason of the multitude of my iniquities.[3] Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me; O LORD, make haste to help me: remember Thy loving-kindness: remember Thy mercies which are everlasting,[4] and heal my soul, because Thou only canst heal it. I am poor, I am in need of everything, and my misery is so great, that of myself, I cannot will what is right, nor fulfil my good desires, if Thou dost not come to my help. And with so much weakness, so many miseries, I yet dare to be proud! O my GOD, have compassion then upon me!

[1] Ps. li. 5. [2] Ps. xl. 15.

[3] "I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to Thee, my GOD."—Ezra ix. 6.

[4] Ps. xl. 13. "Remember, O LORD, Thy tender mercies, and Thy loving-kindnesses, for they have been ever of old."—Ps. xxv. 6.

Let my sighs and tears reach Thy heart! Let that love which led Thee to sacrifice Thyself for me upon the Cross, lead Thee likewise to hear me. What I ask of Thee is Thy love, the pardon of my sins, humility, and the spirit of obedience. O LORD JESUS, come Thyself into my heart; fix there Thine abode, and rule there as a Sovereign, for ever and ever. Come, and Thou shalt be my Consolation, my Strength, my Friend. Come, and Thou shalt teach me to love Thee ever more and more, and to detach myself from creatures. Come, and Thou wilt work a miracle worthy of Thee: of a proud and sensual sinner, Thou wilt make an humble and mortified penitent.

Practical Resolutions.

OF THE HIDDEN LIFE AND OF OBEDIENCE.

Labour to-day, my dear Theotime, to imitate thy LORD JESUS CHRIST in the love of the hidden life, and in obedience.

1st. *The Hidden Life.* Avoid, as far as the decorum of thy state in life will permit, being in the midst of worldly assemblies. Never is a servant of GOD safer than when he keeps himself in retirement. Strive to conceal whatever of good there may be in thee. Seek not to pass for being rich or learned; for alas! what are all the riches, what is the learning of the world? Love to live unknown, and to be accounted no one. Oh, how happy wilt thou be when thou canst see without pain all others honoured, raised to offices, and dignities; thyself meanwhile passed by, unthought of, and even apparently despised! Tear out of thy heart quickly every ambitious desire; ambition, which alienates from JESUS CHRIST the heart in which it is cherished, fills it with sharp pains,

and leaves it no repose. Oh, if men only knew how honours are but heavy burdens, they would not seek them so ardently. Seek not in thy good works the praises of men, but be contented to have GOD and thy conscience for witnesses. One day, upon thy death-bed, thou wilt be richly comforted, for having always lived humbly, little in thine own eyes, forgotten, ignored by all; one day thou wilt know all the value of a life hidden in GOD.

2ndly. *Obedience*. Obey with simplicity and without murmuring all those persons who have any authority over thee; and accustom thyself to see in their commands, those of JESUS CHRIST Himself. True obedience consists, not in doing that which pleases ourselves, but that which is most opposed to our disposition or taste. Hear S. Bernard upon this subject. "A man truly obedient," says he, "knows not what it is, to defer or put off to the morrow; he is an enemy to slowness, he anticipates the commands about to be laid upon him, and his obedience is prompter than the command he receives. He is always ready to see, say, and do everything that is wished, and to run wherever he is sent." Dost thou recognise thyself in this portrait? Make then this day the good and noble resolution to practise holy obedience in its perfection, according to the state in which Providence has placed thee. "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto CHRIST,[1] not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward."[2]

I am not ignorant, my dear Theotime, how much it often costs to break self-will, and know how difficult it is, to subdue it, to fetter it, to subject it to the will of another; I know one is sometimes tempted, at the aspect

[1] Eph. vi. 6. [2] 1 S. Pet. ii. 18.

of difficulties to abandon one's attempt, and to live independently. But, my dear brother, be not discouraged, raise thine eyes to yonder beautiful heaven, to that palace of eternal glory. There GOD awaits thee to reward thy exertions fully. From thence He encourages thee in the midst of thy warfare, and says to thee—"My child, forget not that for love of thee, and to leave thee an excellent example to follow, JESUS CHRIST, My SON, and thy SAVIOUR, for the space of thirty years yielded obedience to two of His creatures: forget not that He carried the perfection of obedience even to dying upon a Cross;[1] forget not lastly that the disciple is not to be greater than his Lord: if therefore thy SAVIOUR placed His Will in subjection throughout His whole life,[2] it is most just that thou shouldest subject thine likewise. Take courage then, and Heaven will be thy reward."

CHAPTER XII.

HOW THE GOODNESS AND MERCY WHICH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST MANIFESTED THROUGH THE COURSE OF HIS ACTIVE LIFE SHOULD EXCITE US TO LOVE HIM.

"Who went about doing good."—Acts x. 38.

I CANNOT pretend to bring forward, for the edification of pious souls, all the traits of goodness which our LORD multiplied throughout His active life; for that it would

[1] "And became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross."—Phil. ii. 8.

[2] "I do always those things that please Him."—S. John viii. 29.

need that I should copy out the whole Gospel. My intention is to dwell merely upon some of these, and to make them the subject of this chapter.

1. *The leper.* Our LORD had come down from the mountain, from whence He had given beautiful instructions to the people, and a great multitude followed Him. And behold, there came a leper, and worshipped Him, saying, "LORD, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean."[1] And JESUS put forth His hand, and touched him, saying, "I will, be thou clean:"[2] and immediately his leprosy was cleansed. LORD JESUS, there is another leper besides the one recorded in the Gospel, who comes to beseech Thy succour. I am that leper. My leprosy, which is wholly spiritual, is only the more hideous, and I blush to discover it to Thee. This leprosy of my soul is my sins, my imperfections, my lesser faults, my lukewarmness in Thy service. O JESUS! vouchsafe to heal me, that my poor soul may become pure and clean in Thy sight, that she may serve Thee with an ever increasing fervour. When Thou shalt come into my heart, in the Holy Communion, cause me to hear those comforting words: My child, "I will, be thou clean."

2. *The centurion.* A centurion had a sick servant, who was very dear to him. As he had heard JESUS spoken of, and the kindness with which He healed the sick, he presented himself to Him as He entered into Capernaum, and prayed Him thus: "LORD, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented."[3] He said no more to Him—but he had said enough to excite the compassion of our LORD, Who immediately replied to him, "I will

[1] S. Matth. viii. 2.
[2] S. Matth. viii. 3.
[3] S. Matth. viii. 6.

come and heal him."[1] The centurion answered and said, "LORD, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst come under my roof; but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed."[2] JESUS praised highly these words full of faith, and said unto him, "Go thy way, and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee." And the servant was healed in the selfsame hour.[3]

O good JESUS! Thou knowest my soul is sick: a burning fever consumes and undermines her, little by little. She is burnt up by a secret fire which nothing can extinguish, she is constrained by an imperative need of loving, and finds in the love of creatures only misery and grief. Good LORD, have compassion upon her! Thy infinite loveliness has allured her, and she sighs day and night for Thee: however unworthy she be to receive Thy visit, she nevertheless waits for Thee to say to her, "I will come and heal thee." Oh, come, LORD JESUS! come, that I may love Thee with all my power: come, that I may cling to Thee, never again to be separated from Thee.

3. *The Canaanitish woman.* "Then JESUS went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O LORD, Thou Son of David: my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil."[4] A touching prayer which we should frequently repeat: "Have mercy upon me, O LORD, my soul is grievously vexed." "But JESUS answered her not a word: and His disciples came and besought Him, saying, Send her away, for she crieth after us."[5] Our holy LORD

[1] S. Matth. viii. 7. S. Luke vii. 7.
[3] S. Matth. viii. 13.
[4] S. Matth. xv. 21, 22.
[5] S. Matth. xv. 23.

is apparently insensible to this moving prayer; He responds not to it: He turns not His eyes even towards her who invokes Him "with strong crying:" He meets her fervour with an apparent indifference more likely to discourage than even a refusal. Still this afflicted mother wearies not: she continues to cry to Him. The Apostles, either disturbed by her crying, or moved by her perseverance and sorrow, become her intercessors, and drawing near to JESUS, pray Him to yield to her entreaties, to listen favourably to her request, to give way at least to her importunities, for she ceases not, they say, to cry after us. "But He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel."[1] When the woman of Canaan saw that the Apostles became her supporters with JESUS, what a joyful hope did she not conceive! But what must have been her surprise and grief upon hearing Him pronounce these terrible words: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Unhappy mother! hast thou heard the words of JESUS CHRIST aright? It is no longer by His silence that He explains Himself, His words are clear and precise. What hope can remain to thee? Retire: go weep over thine own and thy daughter's fate: no more consolation is left to thee but thy tears and thy despair. . . . . Ah! less would suffice to make us take that fatal step: but the woman of Canaan thinks not thus: the vehemence of her desire and her faith is reanimated by obstacles: she puts aside whatever hinders her from forcing her way to JESUS: she casts herself at His feet, and will not leave them until she have obtained the fulfilment of her request. She renews her prayer more urgently than ever, and says to Him, "LORD, Thou

[1] S. Matth. xv. 24.

knowest my grief, Thou seest my confidence, refuse not to help me."[1] Oh, if we prayed thus, with the same faith, fervour, confidence, perseverance, might we not obtain everything? But He answered and said: "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs."[2] What a reply in the mouth of the best of all masters, the most tender of all fathers! Yet our LORD in uttering them, wearied not of suffering the woman of Canaan at His feet: it was for her an inestimable favour, which she regarded as the certain pledge of the miracle she solicited. The expressions of JESUS CHRIST offended her not: true humility takes offence at nothing: she thought them not too strong. She acknowledged that they were applicable to her, and she perceived therein a motive to be urged in the fulfilment of her prayer. . . . In the ways of GOD there is nothing so blind as pride, nothing so clear-sighted as humility. Perhaps she might even have perceived after that, that our LORD, under these apparently harsh expressions, purposely afforded her an opening, and Himself suggested a sure means whereby she should disarm Him. And so indeed the mercy of GOD the SAVIOUR, in conveying balm to the heart which in appearance He seemed disposed to wound, furnished her with a favourable opportunity: the humble Canaanite seized it. And she said, "Truth, LORD: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table."[3] Now this is my state, my situation: that is the object of my petition. Shed profusely Thy gifts upon the children of Abraham: as for me, I aspire only to the least of the mercies which Thou dis-

[1] "Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, LORD, help me."—S. Matth. xv. 25.

[2] S. Matth. xv. 26.

[3] S. Matth. xv. 27.

pensest to them. . . . . How must such an answer have pleased the heart of JESUS! Oh, if we rightly knew that Divine heart, how should we love Him! What confidence should we have in Him! It is humility which makes us to know Him. I will then cling to my SAVIOUR's feet in His house, and there I will ask of Him the salvation of my soul. If He hear me not, I will lift up my voice: if He reject me, I will persevere: if He reproach me with my sins and my perfidies, I will confess them: if He say to me that Paradise is not for sinners like me, I will reply: Thou art just, O LORD, but Thou camest to call sinners, Thou camest to heal the sick, to set free the possessed with devils, to sanctify and save those who believe in Thee, who acknowledge the need they have of Thee, who implore Thy help, and hope in it. That is my state, my situation, and the subject of my petition. Dispense Thy gifts to those faithful souls who deserve them; I lay no claim to such blessings. But when Thou shalt have satisfied the children of Thy house, will there remain no crumbs, of which Thou in Thy mercy wilt make me partaker? "Then JESUS answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith!"[1] O Divine SAVIOUR, what a satisfaction was it to Thy heart, that Thou couldst praise the faith of that woman, whom Thou hadst thus Thyself so severely tried! O woman, what happiness for thee thus to hear thyself praised by Him Who knows the depth of every heart! Thou didst rightly judge of Him in letting nothing discourage thee, and in fearing not to be either importunate or indiscreet. . . . Oh, it is not thus with me; all discourages me: I am disheartened by the least dryness which I experience. "Be it done unto thee

[1] S. Matth. xv. 28.

even as thou wilt: and her daughter was made whole from that very hour." . . . She desired the deliverance of her daughter, and her daughter was set free even at the very same moment. Our will is generally the measure of the gifts which the LORD makes to us. . . . The first condition of a holy prayer, that which the most often is wanting in us, is to will sincerely to obtain that which we ask.[1]

O my holy and most compassionate LORD, come, I beseech Thee, to the help of my profound misery: I desire to love Thee, and I feel I cannot love Thee without the assistance of Thy grace. Detach me from all the things of this world: detach my heart from the riches, the pleasures, the honours of all which is not Thee. Alas! all here below passes away, Thou only passest not away.

4. *The woman taken in adultery.* "And the Scribes and Pharisees brought unto Him a woman taken in adultery: and when they had set her in the midst, they say unto Him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us that such should be stoned, but what sayest Thou? This they said, tempting Him, that they might have to accuse Him."[2] "Whereby," says S. Augustine, "they laid a twofold snare for the Wisdom of GOD, in order that, if He condemned this woman to death, He might lose the reputation for goodness and kindness which He had acquired: or that if He set her at liberty, He might give grounds for calumny, and pass for being an enemy to the law." What did then our good LORD in this matter? He said not, "Let her die," neither said He, "Let her

[1] Evangile medité. [2] S. John viii. 3—6.

be set free:" but as He knew the designs of His enemies, and would not answer them, He first did what a person usually does who wishes to elude an importunate or captious question, who appears not to notice it, from having the mind occupied by some other thought. It was then with that intention that He "stooped down, and with His finger wrote on the ground."[1] His enemies either did not understand it, or wished to force the answer which they expected to furnish matter for their calumnies, and of which His kindness sought to spare them the confusion. "So when they continued asking Him, He lifted up Himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again He stooped down, and wrote on the ground."[2] These words were for the Scribes and Pharisees as a thunder-stroke: it seemed to them as though they had just unveiled all the guilt of their impure consciences: therefore they "went out one by one, beginning at the eldest even unto the last, and JESUS was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst."[3] This poor woman remained alone with JESUS CHRIST, that is to say, as S. Augustine again explains it, the sick person remained alone with the Physician; mighty misery with mighty mercy. Oh! what must have been the shame, the fear of that unhappy one! She knew not yet how compassionate and merciful He was, in Whose Presence she stood. But she was soon to learn it: for "when JESUS had lifted up Himself, and saw none but the woman, He said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No

[1] S. John viii. 6. [2] S. John viii. 7, 8.
[3] S. John viii. 9.

man, LORD. And JESUS said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more."[1] Oh, good JESU! Who art so compassionate to all our weaknesses, and who forgivest with so much mercy, where is the heart which will refuse to love Thee? For me, O my SAVIOUR, I will attach myself to Thee, I will serve Thee and love Thee with all my strength. Receive me in the number of those cherished souls, to whom Thou dispensest Thy choicest gifts, and grant me to be faithful to Thee to my latest breath.

5. *Little children blessed by* JESUS. Our LORD was one day occupied in giving to His apostles lessons of the greatest importance, when some persons came and brought unto Him little children, that He should put His hands on them, and pray.[2] These innocent children, perceiving on the countenance of the Divine Master something sweet and affectionate which won their hearts, approached Him fearlessly, and with that confidence which characterises their age. "But the disciples rebuked them,"[3] because they feared that JESUS would be incommoded by them. They yet knew this Divine Master but ill. "But JESUS said, Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of heaven;" by reason of their simplicity, innocence, and obedience. "Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of GOD as a little child, shall in no wise enter therein." Having given by the way this lesson to His apostles, and in them to all Christians, He drew to Him the little children that were there, "and He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them."[4]

[1] S. John viii. 10, 11.
[2] S. Matth. xix. 13.
[3] S. Mark x. 13.
[4] S. Mark x. 16.

6. *The blind man of Jericho.* "And it came to pass that as He was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the wayside begging: and hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant. And they told him that JESUS of Nazareth passeth by."[1] . . . Our LORD was known in all the country: the poor and afflicted knew of His compassion for them: no one doubted of His power, and this blind man himself probably was not ignorant of JESUS having healed in particular several blind persons. With what joy, therefore, heard he that it was JESUS of Nazareth Who passeth by! He felt that it was for him an opportunity not likely to happen again; and therefore full of confidence "he cried, saying, JESUS, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!"[2] As he knew not the precise moment at which JESUS would pass before him, he ceased not to cry out, to repeat his humble prayer, and to implore the mercy of Him Whom he knew to be so good and so compassionate. "And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace; but he cried so much the more, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me."[3] They neither possessed the confidence, nor knew the need, of the unhappy one who solicits a miracle: therefore the blind man was deaf to all remonstrances, and only cried the more loudly. "And JESUS stood, and commanded him to be brought unto Him, and when he was come near, He asked him, saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?"[4] JESUS well knew what the poor blind man desired, but He had His reasons for asking him this question. "A mother," says a pious author, "knows perfectly well the wants of her child;

[1] S. Luke xviii. 35—37.
[2] S. Luke xviii. 38.
[3] S. Luke xviii. 39.
[4] S. Luke xviii. 40, 41.

but yet she will have him say them to her. It is not merely that he may thus recognise her authority, it is still more that she may have the enjoyment of hearing him lisp out his wishes, of seeing him give her tokens of confidence: it is to excite and feed his gratitude by the readiness she shows to stoop to his will. She loves him, and will be loved by him; these are her motives, which are likewise those of GOD when He requires of us that we should discover to Him our necessities, which He knows better than we do ourselves." "And he (the blind man) said unto Him, LORD, that I may receive my sight. And JESUS said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying GOD."[1]

7. JESUS *weeps over Jerusalem.* Our LORD one day was approaching Jerusalem, "And when He was come near He beheld the city and wept over it."[2] He wept! Oh what an imposing and solemn sight, to behold GOD weep. The cause of these His tears, was one well worthy of a heart like His. Jerusalem was to perish, and perish because of her crimes, which she was about to crown by the greatest of all crimes. After being stained with the blood of her Messiah, the queen of cities was to be no more than a heap of ashes diluted with the blood of her citizens. The crime would be committed in a few days, the punishment was deferred but for a few years; both events were not less present to the SAVIOUR, than if they were being enacted before His eyes. What a sight for GOD the SAVIOUR! and with what deep bitterness of heart addressed He to the ill-fated city these sorrowful and pathetic words—"If thou hadst known, even thou, at

[1] S. Luke xviii. 41—43. [2] S. Luke xix. 41.

least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."[1] JESUS had yet another very powerful motive for shedding bitter tears. He thought of us all individually, and in the woes of Jerusalem, He saw those of perishing souls. "There will come," exclaimed He, "a sorrowful time for thee, when thine enemies shall lay a trench about thee, and shut thee in on every side. So it happened to Jerusalem to the full; we know the formidable works which the Romans carried on, and the wall which they raised around that unhappy city, which shut her in more and more each day; which occasioned the horrible famine, known to the whole world, during which mothers ate their children. Thus will it happen to the sinful soul. Shut in on all sides by her evil habits, Divine grace and the bread of life will find no further entrance there: she will perish with hunger; she will be overwhelmed with her sins; and not a stone will be left upon another. Strange state of that soul. Entire overturn of the whole interior fabric. Reason and spirituality shall be no more; all become debased; all become carnal; all become sense; all be beaten down and laid even with the ground. Where is now the beautiful architecture, which marked the hand of GOD? It is gone: there is not left one stone upon another, neither order nor

[1] S. Luke xix. 42—44. Le P. de Ligny's Life of JESUS CHRIST.

union in that soul; no part holds with another, and the disorder there is universal. Wherefore? because principle is gone out of her; GOD, the fear of Him, conscience, these first impressions which make the rational creature feel it has a sovereign: that foundation overturned, and what can remain whole? . . . At this sad spectacle our SAVIOUR weeps: 'If thou hadst known, O my soul, if thou hadst known!' at least in this day yet granted thee, and in which GOD visits thee by His grace. The day will come, known to GOD, after which there will be for the soul no further resource, 'Because,' JESUS says, 'thou knowest not the time of thy visitation.' When an internal light discovers to thee thy sins; when thou art invited to give glory to GOD, as when, in the day of the visitation of Jerusalem, every one, even to the children, cried, Hosanna to the Son of David; if thou givest no heed, the moment is gone by; that grace so living and so mighty will return no more; . . . 'But now it is hid from thine eyes.' Thy heart is grown heavy; thine eyes are closed and darkened; thy passions blind thee; a thick veil is upon thine eyelids; a terrible drowsiness weighs them down.

"O soul! Thy LORD weeps because of this, and thou dost not weep thyself? Weep, weep, O spiritual Jerusalem! Mourn for thy loss, at least in this thy day in which thy SAVIOUR visits thee in so wonderful a manner. If hitherto thou hast been insensible to thine own loss, weep to-day and thou shalt live. Lose not any moment of grace, because thou canst never know that it is not the last which will be given to thee." (Bossuet.)

8. JESUS *raises Lazarus.* "Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha . . . Therefore his sisters sent unto

Him, saying, LORD, behold he whom Thou lovest is sick."[1] An excellent way to pray, says Bossuet, after the holy fathers; without asking anything, one lays before Him Who loves, the necessity of one's friend. Let us pray thus; let us be persuaded that JESUS loves us; let us present ourselves to Him as sick without saying or asking anything. Let us pray thus for ourselves; let us pray thus for others. It is one of the most excellent ways of praying. . . . In the Gospel it is often said to JESUS—"Come, O LORD, and heal: lay on Thine hands;" touch the sick. Here it is simply said, "He whom Thou lovest is sick." Our LORD hears the voice of want, the more so that this mode of praying has in it something more respectful and more submissive, but also more loving. Let us practise it chiefly with reference to the maladies of the soul. "When JESUS heard that, He said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of GOD, that the SON of GOD might be glorified thereby."[2] Nevertheless, Lazarus died; but the SAVIOUR meant to convey that death would be conquered, and the SON of GOD glorified by this victory. "Now JESUS loved Martha, and her sister and Lazarus."[3] A heart so loving and so easily touched as that of JESUS, necessarily had friends: they were few, but they were good, virtuous, charitable.[4] Let

[1] S. John xi. 1, 3. [2] S. John xi. 4. [3] S. John xi. 5.

[4] JESUS CHRIST, as GOD, loved men from all eternity; as Man He loved them in time, and from the moment of His conception, with that unearthly charitable love, which has GOD alone for its end and aim. We are not in ignorance that He had those two kinds of love for Martha, for her sister Mary, and for their brother Lazarus; and that with the predilection which He has for Saints and Elect. But as Man He was able to have,

us take Him for our model in our friendships. JESUS set out with His Apostles; when JESUS came, He found that he had lain in the grave four days already. Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off, viz., a little more than half a league. "And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary to comfort them concerning their brother. Then Martha, as soon as she heard that JESUS was coming, went and met Him; but Mary was still in the house. Then said Martha unto JESUS, LORD, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died."[1] This is the prayer of a friend, who speaks to her Friend, Whose power and kindness she knows. "No, LORD, if Thou hadst been here my brother had not died;" Thou wouldst have healed him with a single word of Thine. Such is Thy loving-kindness, that Thou wouldst not have let him die before Thine eyes; such is Thy power that

and indeed had other affections: natural love, grounded upon kindred, intimacy, sympathy and love, from esteem and kindness, founded upon pure inclinations and virtuous habits; love from gratitude founded on the attachment manifested to Him, and on the services rendered to Him. This last sort of affection He had not for all men, because He found it not called forth in all men; but He was able to have it for those in whom He found a cause; such were Lazarus and his two sisters, for whom JESUS CHRIST should have had the love of kindness because they were virtuous persons, and of gratitude, because they showed Him kindness. This is the sense in which it is here said He loved them, that is to say, He had for them a very especial friendship. One cannot doubt that He had one of these sorts of love or friendship, because it is evident that they are not sins, and it is of faith, that JESUS CHRIST took all that appertains to human nature, sin only excepted.

[1] S. John xi. 17—21.

Thou wouldst have preserved him from death; but Thou hast willed to be absent. Although absent, Thou yet couldst have healed him; Thou didst not will to do so, Thine is the right; we submit ourselves to Thy Will, and however severe it be, it will never diminish our love for Thee, or the faith or confidence we have in Thee. "But I know that even now, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of GOD, GOD will give it Thee."[1] Thou hast all power, not only to prevent death, but likewise to snatch from the hands of death its prey. "JESUS saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto Him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day."[2] It is not that she doubts that JESUS can raise him before that time, but that she does not judge herself worthy of that grace.

"JESUS said unto her, I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die."[3] O words full of consolation! I, who at present enjoy life, wherefore should I fear death? For if I believe in JESUS CHRIST, (and I do believe in Him with my whole heart,) I shall not die. I shall leave this weak and infirm body, to take it again one day impassible and glorious; but in awaiting that great day, and in quitting this body, I shall continue to live; I shall only change my abode, and instead of living on earth in the midst of the crimes which overrun it, my soul shall be in the hands of the LORD.[4] It is of importance to meditate well upon this truth, in order to strengthen us against the fear of death, which is so excessive in men that it is liable to deprive them of their senses to hear the announcement

[1] S. John xi. 22.
[2] S. John xi. 23, 24.
[3] S. John xi. 25, 26.
[4] Altered from the original.

that they must die, as experience proves. There is great need to provide against this fear. This is chiefly to be done by meditating upon the promises of the Gospel concerning death, and attaching ourselves by a lively faith to the life which we look for. When Martha had thus heard the words of JESUS, "she went away, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee." What tidings for Mary! "She arose quickly, and came unto Him."[1] In our afflictions, in our troubles, JESUS calls us in the depth of our heart: He asks for us: He invites us to go unto Him, and to seek in Him alone our consolation. Let us imitate the eagerness and diligence of Mary: let us leave men to go and pour out our heart and our tears at the feet of JESUS. "Then when Mary was come where JESUS was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying unto Him," like her sister, with as much confidence and resignation, and with yet more tenderness, "LORD, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died."[2] Scarcely had she pronounced these words when she burst into tears, so that her tears and sighs would not permit her to say more. . . . Weep, O loving Mary, weep at the feet of thy SAVIOUR, and beneath His eyes! O, how soothing are those tears! O, how different are they from those which thou didst shed in secret, or which escaped thee in the presence of them who came to comfort thee! Thou weepest at the feet of thy LORD. It was there that once thou didst listen to His voice, and it is there He now hears thy wailing. Then His words entered into thy heart—now thy tears penetrate His. Oh, who will give to me to weep thus at my SAVIOUR's feet, to mourn for my sins, to de-

[1] S. John xi. 28, 29. [2] S. John xi. 32.

plore there my misery? Oh, wherefore should I not bring to the feet of this Divine Comforter all my troubles and griefs? If I keep them within myself, I only aggravate them; if I tell them to men, they cannot lighten them to me, and often their flattering words but increase my grief instead of delivering me from it. Thou alone, O JESUS, art the Divine Comforter whom my soul desires. Thou callest me, Thou askest for me, I flee unto Thee. Thou dost not forbid me to weep, but my tears shed in Thy Presence at the foot of Thy Cross, flow there with sweetness, and soon Thy love, and the sight of Thy sufferings, heal the wound of my heart, calm my griefs, soften my troubles and make me love them. Thou wilt be then in all the events of my life, my refuge, my hope, and my only consolation. "When JESUS therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled, and said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto Him, LORD, come and see. JESUS wept."[1] Where are those false philosophers who would have us to be unmoved? That is not the wisdom of JESUS, Who wept at the death of His friend. . . . . Thou weepest, O Divine LORD! O loving and compassionate heart, Thou weepest for a deceased friend, thereby to teach us, on similar occasions, that while submission is required of us, tears are not interdicted. Thou weepest to soothe our tears, to sanctify them, and dry up their source. Thou weepest over us, of whom the greater number plunge themselves into eternal death. O good JESUS, Thou mournest over my sins, and I am insensible to them! Suffer not, O LORD, so much hardness; apply to me the merit of Thy tears, and let them excite mine.

[1] S. John xi. 33—35.

"Then said the Jews, Behold, how He loved him!"[1] Be Thou praised, O LORD JESUS, for having willed to exhibit to observation the tenderness Thou hast towards Thy friends. May it be permitted to us to imitate it, and to love according to Thy example: hard and insensible hearts are not those which please Thee. But do Thou regulate our friendships; sanctify them, and be Thou the model of them: grant that we may never flatter our friends; grant that we may correct in them, like Thee, inconsiderate eagerness and other faults with gentleness and prudence: cause us to love in our friends that which is good and sedate, as Thou dost. "JESUS therefore, again groaning in Himself, cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. JESUS said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto Him, LORD, by this time he stinketh; for he hath been dead four days."[2] Death appears here in all its horror. Lazarus is dead, shrouded, buried, already corrupted, so offensive that they dread to remove the stone of his tomb, lest the place and the Person of JESUS should be infected by the insupportable odour. It is a horrible spectacle: at which JESUS groans and weeps. In the death of Lazarus, His friend, He mourns over the common punishment of all mankind: He views human nature as having been created in immortality, and condemned to death for its sin. He is the Friend of the whole human race: He comes to re-establish it: He begins by mourning over its calamity with deep groaning. That which in His sight is most dreadful in death, is that sin caused it: and it is sin, rather than death, which causes Him this groaning, trouble, and tears. He is seized with renewed shudder-

[1] S. John xi. 36. [2] S. John xi. 38, 39.

ing the nearer He approaches the grave. In beholding the frightful cavern where the dead is lying one might say, there is no remedy for so great an evil; one might be tempted to think that the LORD has but tears to bestow thereupon: but His friendship and power are soon to break forth, and Lazarus will rise victorious from the arms of death. . . . "Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And JESUS lifted up His eyes, and said, FATHER, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me: and I know that Thou hearest Me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me. And when He had thus spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth."[1]

I have dwelt somewhat at length upon the account of the resurrection of Lazarus, because the holy Gospel presents to us in this event the contemplation of our good LORD conversing before our eyes with friends whom He honoured with His intimacy, sharing their sorrows, and employing all His power to comfort them. It is very sweet and consolatory to see our GOD thus touched by our miseries, and ever ready to heal our woes. It appears to me impossible to meditate seriously upon this feature in the life of our LORD, as likewise the history of S. Mary Magdalene, which follows in the next chapter, without feeling oneself wholly inflamed with love for a GOD so loving, so merciful, so compassionate. Oh! if we but knew JESUS! if we would meditate upon the least events in His mortal life, we should strive to love Him with all our heart, and we should exclaim with S. Paul, "If any man love not the LORD JESUS CHRIST, let him be Ana-

[1] S. John xi. 41—44.

thema Maran-atha."[1] O LORD my GOD, in the Name of Thyself and of Thy glory, burn up my heart, I beseech Thee, with the flames of Thy love. May I live but for Thee! may I live but to weep over my calamity, in having angered Thee and in having so late loved Thee! O my GOD! have compassion upon me, and give me Thy love. Riches are nothing, pleasures are nothing, honours and praises are nothing: Thy love, O my JESUS! Thy love is what my soul seeks, desires, and asks. Have then compassion upon me, O LORD, and give me what is wanting to me. Thou knowest my needs: I give myself up to Thee for ever. Amen.

Practical Resolutions.

NO MAN CAN SERVE TWO MASTERS.

"How long halt ye between two opinions?"[2] "No man can serve two masters."[3] "We well know," says Fenelon, "that we must serve GOD and love Him, if we will be saved: but we would wish to leave out of the service of GOD all that is burdensome, and retain only what is pleasant: we would wish to serve Him upon condition of doing so only in words and ceremonies: short ceremonies moreover of which we soon become weary and tired. We would wish to love Him provided we may love together with Him, and perhaps above Him, all those things which He does not love, and which He condemns in these worldly vanities. We would wish to love Him, if we might diminish in nothing that blind self-love, which reaches to idolatry, and which is the cause that instead of

[1] 1 Cor. xvi. 22. [2] 1 Kings xviii. 21. [3] S. Matth. vi. 24.

bringing our wills to agree with that of GOD, as of Him for Whom we are created, we wish to bring down GOD'S will to agree with ours, and to seek Him only as a reference which comforts us when creatures come to fail us. We would wish to serve and love Him, upon condition that we may be allowed to be ashamed of loving Him, to conceal it as a weakness, to blush on His account, as for a master whose service is a dishonour, to give Him a certain external of religion to avoid scandal, and to live at the caprice of the world, granting nothing to GOD but with the said world's permission. What service and what love! Oh, is it thus that our LORD JESUS has loved us?"

My dear Theotime, learn at length to love GOD in reality, and as He will be loved. To love GOD is to have a hatred of sin, faithfully to observe His holy law, to have no other will but His. To love GOD is to love what JESUS CHRIST has loved, chastity, humiliations, sufferings: it is to hate what He has hated, the world, vanity, and our passions. Can we believe we love GOD, to Whom we will not assimilate ourselves? To love GOD is to converse gladly with Him, to long to go to Him, to sigh and pine for Him. O what a false love is that which cares not to see what it loves! Ask then of GOD without ceasing, to-day and ever, the gift of His holy love, and say to Him, "LORD, make me to love Thee, and show Thee my love, by my deeds!"

CHAPTER XIII.

Of her who loved Jesus; or, the History of S. Mary Magdalene.

"Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much." —S. Luke vii. 47.

There are few histories in the Gospel which furnish us with a more comforting example of the mercy of Jesus, our good Master, than that of S. Mary Magdalene. It seems to me that one cannot read this history without being impelled by an earnest longing to love a God so compassionate and ever ready to forgive a poor sinner who comes to express to Him his repentance. Let us then relate it in all its simplicity.

"And one of the Pharisees desired Him that He would eat with him. And He went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. And behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at His feet behind Him,[1] weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment."[2] Poor sinner! she felt herself overwhelmed with the weight of her sins: she was cruelly torn with remorse; a thousand passions long nourished

[1] The attitude in which they placed themselves at table at that time enabled her easily to do so. They lay on small couches with the head turned to the table, and the feet outside.

[2] S. Luke vii. 36—38.

in her breast were raising there a fearful tempest: she no longer knew what was to become of her; when lo! she heard that JESUS was at the Pharisee's house. He Who is said to be so good, Who heals the sick, Who comforts the afflicted, Who does good to the whole world: O, I will go and cast myself at His feet, the unhappy sinner said: she went and there wept. . . . O my GOD, how sweet, how consoling is it for a sinner thus to weep at the feet of JESUS! saying nothing, asking nothing, but contented to weep, and make known by his tears his repentance and his love. JESU, my kind LORD, give me the grace to weep thus, as long as I live.

"Now when the Pharisee which had bidden Him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if He were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth Him, for she is a sinner."[1] But that Pharisee knew not the goodness and compassion of our Divine SAVIOUR, Who said to him, "There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And He said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And He turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest Me no water for My feet; but she hath washed My feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest Me no kiss; but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss My feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but this woman hath

[1] S. Luke vii. 39.

anointed My feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."[1]

O my JESUS, how much ought I not to love Thee: I, a poor sinner, to whom Thou hast forgiven so many ingratitudes, how ought I not to love Thee! . . . But alas! I yet love Thee so little, I serve Thee so ill, that I blush with shame for it. Good JESUS, I beseech Thee, have compassion on me.

"And He said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven."[2] Happy Mary Magdalene! she had understood the heart of JESUS: she had divined all His mercy for sinners, and doubtless she expected that reply: "Thy sins are forgiven." O how sweet it is to hear these words come from the mouth of our SAVIOUR! Kind LORD, loving Friend of my soul, I am also with Magdalene at Thy feet: vouchsafe to cast on me a look of kindness, and to say to me as to her: "My son, I forgive thee all thy sins."

"And He said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."[3] The holy penitent, filled with gratitude for so much clemency and compassion, attached herself to JESUS, and resolved to follow Him everywhere with other holy women, to share as she should be able His sorrows and fatigues, and to minister to His sustenance. She left Him no more, and when she heard He had been seized by the Jews, she followed Him through the bloody scenes of His Passion. What courage was here! Almost all the Apostles had basely forsaken their Master: Peter had denied Him three times, and lo! that

[1] S. Luke vii. 41—47. [2] S. Luke vii. 48. [3] S. Luke vii. 50.

woman braved the insults and threats of the soldiers, and the railleries of the multitude, in order not to be separated from her SAVIOUR: she climbed Mount Calvary, stationed herself at the foot of the Cross of JESUS, and there she shed abundantly tears of pity and of love. . . . O my GOD! who will give me grace to weep like her? who will give me grace to remain continually at the foot of the Cross of JESUS, in order to show Him my love? . . . . My gentle SAVIOUR, favourably hear my prayer, and give me Thy grace: I ask Thee for neither riches, nor pleasures, nor honours; what I desire is Thy grace; the grace to abide with Thee for ever upon the Cross; the grace to die to the world for the love of Thee.

"The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre."[1] When the LORD JESUS had yielded up His last breath, they laid His body in a sepulchre cut out of a rock, and it was thither Mary Magdalene, guided by her love, repaired at early dawn, the day following the Sabbath, for the purpose of embalming Him. She advanced, and was not long in perceiving that her Divine LORD was no longer there. In her grief "she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom JESUS loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the LORD out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid Him."[2] Upon hearing that, the two Apostles went with her to the sepulchre, and not finding JESUS there, they returned to their own homes. But Mary Magdalene could not make up her mind to follow them: she "stood without at the sepulchre weeping."[3] Alas! she had come

[1] S. John xx. 1. [2] S. John xx. 2. [3] S. John xx. 11.

with the hope of finding her kind Master, and she finds Him not! To whom can she have recourse? Everything abandons her: nought remains to her save her grief and her tears. . . . O my GOD! what an excellent lesson for us in this! if we sought JESUS, as Mary Magdalene did, if, after having lost His grace by sin, or the consolations of His love by our lukewarmness, we realized as she did the greatness of our loss,—if, like her, we persisted in seeking JESUS,—if we called Him with cries and tears, we should, like her, find Him again, and that with an abundance of joy which would surpass all our hopes.

"And as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, and seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of JESUS had lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my LORD, and I know not where they have laid Him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw JESUS standing, and knew not that it was JESUS. JESUS saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing Him to be the gardener, saith unto Him, Sir, if thou have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away."[1] Behold the love of this woman for her Divine LORD: she has lost Him, and she inquires of heaven and earth, "Saw ye Him Whom my soul loveth?"[2]

She has no repose, because she no longer sees her LORD, and can no longer prove to Him her love by her solicitude and reverential attention: she must find Him again. . . . . O my beloved Redeemer, give me, I be-

[1] S. John xx. 11—15. [2] Cant. iii. 3.

seech Thee, a heart capable of loving Thee as much as Thou meritest. Whom should I love in heaven or earth, if I love not Thee?

"JESUS saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto Him, Rabboni: which is to say, Master."[1] Who would be able to tell the joy which transported Mary Magdalene when she recognised JESUS? She gives a cry, and casts herself at His feet: it was all she could do: her silence and tears speak more to the heart of her LORD than any words could.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE: O good JESU, suffer me to open my heart to Thee, and to express to Thee how Thy conduct to Mary Magdalene touches and comforts me. Thy Gospel informs me that to her Thou didst first show Thyself after Thy Resurrection; hast Thou then forgotten that she was formerly a sinner, and scandalized a whole city by her conduct?

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED: My son, it is true that Mary Magdalene offended Me, but she knew how to repair her sins by the constancy and ardour of her love. O My son, how many are there who have first been great sinners, and afterwards have merited My most distinguished favours by their repentance, and the intensity of their love? I readily forget the multitude of the sins of a soul which loves Me.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE: O my gentle LORD, how many times have I not offended Thee since I have been on earth! Who could count the multitude of my sins! But oh, my loving Friend, oh, my good LORD, have compassion on me; forget my offences, since I am sorry for them, and let me bring forth fruits meet for re-

[1] S. John xx. 16.

pentance, so that loving Thee much like Magdalene, like her I may in the end be accepted. Amen.

Practical Resolutions.

TO EXCITE ONESELF TO CONTRITION, IN CONFESSING ONE'S SINS.

Each time that thou confessest thy sins excite in thy soul a great sorrow for all of them, especially for the mortal sins of thy past life. May these sins, my dear Theotime, be ever before thine eyes. 1st. To humble thyself for them continually, and to drive away the proud thoughts which might arise in thy heart. 2ndly. To ask forgiveness of GOD for them; nothing so pleases the heart of our LORD, as the repentance which proceeds from a soul already long purified. 3rdly. Above all, to excite thee to the love of our good Master; it is impossible not to love Him, when one considers that He has graciously willed to forgive us so many sins. When thou receivest absolution, endeavour to put into thy soul an implicit confidence in the mercy of our LORD, and say not with so many distrustful souls, "Who knows if my sins are remitted?" One act of confidence in the goodness and mercy of JESUS, when we have neglected nothing to make a good confession, is of greater value than all the fears possible, which can only impede our advancement in the love of GOD. Form then the habit, after confessing thy sins, of making an act of confidence, and of rejection of all the fears which the devil may suggest to thee.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Parable of the Prodigal Son.

"This my son was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found."—S. Luke xv. 24.

Our good Lord has placed before our eyes in this parable, both the picture of our wanderings, and a lively image of the tenderness He manifests to a repentant sinner, who comes to cast himself into His arms. Let us then attentively meditate thereon: we shall draw from it numberless motives to love our Divine Master more and more.

"A certain man had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living."[1] This was strange conduct, and nevertheless, such was mine for many years. Scarcely had I sufficient reason to distinguish good from evil, than I had already said to my God: Lord, haste Thee to give me health, knowledge, riches, and beauty; for I desire to use all these, not to Thy glory, but to offend Thee, not to my salvation, but to my ruin. O my God, I confess to Thee with shame, that this is the language which I have held, not perhaps in words, but by my actions. Vouchsafe to pardon my folly.

"And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living."[2] To what pass goes not an unhappy soul which has once left

[1] S. Luke xv. 11, 12. [2] S. Luke xv. 13.

its GOD? Alas! I have proved it by lamentable experience. I have thought to find happiness far from Him, and I have left Him. I have run on in the ways of iniquity: I have fallen from one abyss into another. Whither then went I? An inward voice told me that in vain I sought to go away from my GOD; it cried to me, that in spite of myself I was going to Him, but that after having quitted a GOD full of goodness and mercy, I should find a GOD, just, and offended; I heard that voice —it terrified me . . . . and, nevertheless, O my GOD! I fled still, and ever went further from Thee. Alas! how many graces have I not lost, in living thus far from Thee? The graces of Baptism, the graces of Thine inspirations, the graces of the good examples I received, the graces of every kind, have I lost all, dissipated, and trampled under foot! O my GOD! could I ever weep enough for so great a calamity?

"And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want."[1] O, who can tell the indigence in which a sinner finds himself, who has ceased to love his GOD, and is alienated from Him? A cruel hunger devours him, and he has nothing wherewith to relieve it. He goes to beg everywhere for pleasures, honours, and human consolations; but all these things but aggravate his evil. He is ever the prey of the restless desire to be satisfied, and nothing, absolutely nothing, can give him that which he seeks. He is fallen into the most fearful want; then what will he, unhappy one, do? Let us hear.

"And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine."[2]

[1] S. Luke xv. 14. [2] S. Luke xv. 15.

Poor sinner, what hast thou gained by forsaking thy GOD and FATHER? Happiness? Nay, but I see thee ever in tears and regrets. Hast thou gained calm tranquillity? Thou livest ever in fear and trouble; the thoughts of death and eternity throw thee into consternation, and thy remorse becomes every day more agonising and insupportable. What then hast thou gained thereby? Shame; yea, shame. Thou wast a child of GOD, and thou hast renounced this glorious title, to enlist in the service of the devil; thou wast the heir of a beautiful kingdom, and thou hast reduced thyself to the most complete deprivation. And what hast thou received from the new master whom thou hast preferred to thy GOD? Ah, he has given thee swine to feed. He has covered thee with ignominy, in plunging thee into the foulest pleasures; he has dragged thy soul into the mire of voluptuousness, and, what is yet more frightful, he has persuaded thee, that in that was the end of thy being; he has caused thee to forget thy heavenly origin, and to attach thyself to mire. O sinner, where is thy innocence? What hast thou done with thy soul, that soul so lovely, while pure, so happy while loving GOD?

"And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him."[1] Can degradation reach lower? it is a dreadful image, yet a true one, of the sinner who obstinately lives in his sins. He grants to his passions all they demand; he rolls on from precipice to precipice; he indulges in every pleasure, and is reduced to the fearful necessity of obeying as a vile slave, the most shameful suggestions of the devil. "He would fain have filled his belly with the husks

[1] S. Luke xv. 16.

that the swine did eat." . . . O my GOD, give me grace to understand rightly all the degree of shame to which an unhappy sinner condemns himself who lives far from Thee. Make it to be understood by the many unhappy ones who love Thee not.

"And when he came to himself he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!"[1] A sinner in the midst of his evil ways sometimes recalls to mind the happiness he enjoyed, when his soul was innocent, and the abundant graces which he then received. This remembrance brings to him regrets, and these are the beginning of conversion—of a return to GOD. Alas, he says within himself, let me confess it, I am very miserable. To whatever side I turn, I behold nothing but causes of regret, grief, and fear. In vain I endeavour to shun myself; I cannot succeed. The thought of my former happiness for ever and ever pursues and besets me; the multitude of the iniquities which for many years have accumulated over my head, alarm and terrify me; remorse night and day mercilessly devours me; my insatiable passions clamorously demand gratification; they rule me imperiously, I am forced to obey, and I have not a moment's repose. Oh, wretched man that I am! nevertheless I see around me so many persons who live in the peace and calm of a good conscience. Such are my parents, my friends, my acquaintances. Ah, they are contented; they want for nothing; *they love* GOD; what can I say more? They have bound down these self-same passions which tyrannise over me; the heavenly gifts of which I, for so long a time, have been deprived, they

[1] S. Luke xv. 17.

receive abundantly; that paradise which I have lost, and of which I have rendered myself unworthy, they await with placid confidence, and the hope which they have thereof, overwhelms them with sacred joy.

"I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants."[1] This is the language of a sinner, who, touched by the grace of heaven meditates upon a return to GOD. "No, no," exclaims he, "it is not possible I should longer remain in a state so terrible: *surgam*. I will arise, I will go to my heavenly FATHER, I will ask of Him forgiveness. O my SAVIOUR JESUS, what mouth shall be eloquent enough to express the varied sentiments which agitate the sinner who begins to repent of his long wanderings, and who desires to be restored to Thy favour! His passions yet importunate, whisper to him: 'Wherefore dost thou leave us? from this moment will there be nothing in common between thee and us? from this moment will such and such a thing be interdicted to thee for ever? Thinkest thou then that thou canst dispense with such and such a pleasure? Ah! think of what thou art about to do.' . . . . And the poor sinner, accustomed as he is to obey all their suggestions, scarcely any longer knows what he ought to do; he hesitates, and wavers. But Thy grace, O JESUS, does not abandon him; it adheres to him; urges, incites him, and says to him with ineffable sweetness, Return, O return to thy GOD, and do not let thyself be terrified by difficulties. I will be with thee. Canst thou then not do, what so many others weaker than thyself have done?

[1] S. Luke xv. 18, 19.

Listen no more to the voice of thy sinful flesh! it promises thee delights; but are they to be compared with those which thou shalt find in the law of thy LORD and thy GOD? O, how terrible is the inward strife of a repentant soul! but in return, how greatly is that unhappy soul comforted, when it has at length nobly broken its chains, and given itself to its Divine Master! And he arose and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him."[1] In this, shine forth in all their lustre the goodness and mercy of our GOD. No sooner sees He a poor sinner seeking to set himself free from the fetters of his evil habits, than He comes to his help, and encourages him. He rejects him not when he comes before Him, but receives him with kindness, and gives him the kiss of peace and reconciliation. He restores to him the robe of his innocence, and invites heaven to share the happiness He experiences in recovering His child—"He was dead, and is alive again."[2]

LORD JESUS, I shall never forget the happy moment when Thy grace, opening my eyes, caused me to perceive the profound misery in which I was, whilst I lived without loving Thee. Where was I, O my GOD, where was I when Thou camest to see me? Alas! I was so far from Thee, that I could never have again drawn near to Thee. But Thy mercy came to take me by the hand, and conducted me to Thy feet. O ye heavens, be filled with astonishment! Instead of the reproaches which were so justly due to me, I received from Thee, O my GOD! a reception of which the resemblance alone makes

[1] S. Luke xv. 20. [2] S. Luke xv. 24.

me shed tears of tenderness! I was prostrated before Thee; I dared not raise my eyes, so greatly ashamed was I of my wretchedness. I awaited my sentence of condemnation, and lo, like the prodigal's father, Thou didst raise me, Thou didst press me in Thy arms, and to Thy heart, and saidst to me—"My son, all is forgotten, all is pardoned!" O my GOD, how is it that I have had the unhappiness of leaving Thee, and grieving Thee by so many sins? Forgive me, O my FATHER! I humbly ask of Thee forgiveness! I detest my ingratitude! I abhor my numberless offences, and I desire to amend them as far as possible. Only, O my GOD, give me Thy strength: for Thou knowest that of myself I can do nothing; give me Thy strength, and all will be possible to me. Give me the grace to be sorry for my sins, and to live as a penitent to the end of my life, in order that I may one day go into heaven to sing of Thy infinite mercies. so be it.

Practical Resolutions.

SPIRIT OF PENITENCE.

"One single sin," says Tertullian, "deserves to be wept for eternally." How much then, dear Theotime, oughtest thou not to weep for all those which thou hast committed since thou hast been in the world? Pass at least this whole day in the holy exercises of penitence; refuse thy senses the small satisfactions which thou mayest lawfully grant them; redouble the fervour of thy devotional exercises; endeavour to live in a deep inward stillness. Recall often to thy memory on the one hand

the multitude of thy sins, in order to hate them and ask pardon for them; and on the other hand the almost infinite number of the benefits of GOD towards thee, in order to thank Him for them, and to excite thyself to gratitude and love. If thou art rich, give some alms to the poor, especially to the sick poor; if thou art poor thyself, make a good act of resignation to the will of GOD. Through a spirit of penitence or mortification, speak little, and in a lower voice than usual. Show thyself more gentle, more affable, more obliging even than is thy wont; live more retired, and even avoid paying any visit which charity does not command.

Endure meekly and without repining the fatigues of thy profession, sicknesses, injuries, the hard words, the ill-treatments of which thou mayest be the object. To encourage thyself, say often within thyself—"What are these sufferings, in comparison of the eternal sufferings of hell, which I have so often deserved? O, I am too happy in being able to earn the reward Thou hast laid up for me at so little cost." If thou art insulted or despised, and thou feelest thy pride rise, hasten to recall the presence of GOD, and say to Him—"My GOD, I accept this affront in a spirit of penitence, and for the love of Thee." Settle thyself then in a state of profound calm; by this thou wilt make to GOD a sacrifice He will never despise, I mean, the sacrifice of a repentant and humbled heart.[1]

[1] Ps. li. 17.

CHAPTER XV.

THE WHOLE LIFE OF OUR DIVINE SAVIOUR WAS A CONTINUAL MARTYRDOM.

"A Man of sorrows."—Isaiah liii. 3.

YES, our holy LORD was truly a man of sorrows. His life was wholly filled with inward and outward sufferings; it was a continual martyrdom; a thousand times more cruel than all we can imagine. What had He not to suffer, from the hour of His conception till His nativity? It is certain that He then enjoyed His perfect reason, and that He was exquisitely alive to all His sufferings. What love was there in the heart of this kind LORD, since to demonstrate it to us He willed to condescend so far. What had He not to suffer likewise at His birth? Born in a stable! exposed to the injury of the air, He trembles with the cold, and weeps. Upon leaving the stable of Bethlehem, He sheds the first-fruits of His blood beneath the knife of the circumcision. A little later He is obliged to leave His native country, and flee into a strange land, to escape from the fury of an impious and sanguinary king. During His whole life He endures the inconveniences of poverty; this life of sorrows to be terminated by a cruel death. O my LORD, this is then what Thou hast suffered for the love of me. O, it is very just I should suffer something likewise for love of Thee. Give me grace, I pray Thee, to endure at least with patience and resignation all the troubles of this transitory life.

The whole life of JESUS *was a martyrdom.* Yes, and

what rendered that martyrdom yet more terrible, was the perfect foreknowledge which He possessed of the torments He should endure in His Passion. From the first moment of His life, He had present to His mind, the Scourge, the Thorns, the Cross, the Outrages of that Passion, and the agonising Death which awaited Him. Saw He a lamb in the meadows, or victims in the Temple, the sight reminded Him that He Himself was the Lamb of GOD, and that He was to be offered up a sacrifice on the Cross. Cast He His eyes towards the City of Jerusalem, He remembered all the outrages with which that ungrateful city would overwhelm Him. The sight of a mountain brought to His thought Mount Calvary, where He should shed all His blood: when His eyes rested upon His loving mother, what were not then the harrowing feelings which possessed His soul? Already beheld He her in spirit, at the foot of His Cross, sorrowful, borne down, agonized with grief; already imagined He the moment come, when He should at last bequeath her to His beloved disciple. Thus all things suggested to Him His Passion, and the torments He was therein to suffer; and this cruel anticipation embittered all the moments of His life.

But that which most affected our Divine SAVIOUR was the sight of our sins, and the ingratitude by which we were about to repay the torments He was to endure for us with so much love. This sight occasioned Him inward sorrows, greater and more acute than any which man has ever experienced on earth. Consequently, I likewise have contributed by my sins to afflict this good LORD. I have laboured to increase the number of His sufferings! for certainly had I sinned less, He had suffered less. It is then most just that I should mourn un-

ceasingly my past sins, and that I should hold the same language as did a holy woman. She was exhorted by her spiritual guide, to take comfort regarding her salvation and to dry up the source of her tears, because GOD had forgiven her sins. "Oh, father," replied she, shedding still more abundant tears, "how can you expect me to cease from weeping, when I know that my sins were the cause that JESUS groaned and was afflicted all through His life?"

Alas! how far is our conduct from resembling the feelings of that eminent saint. "We pass our life in the midst of joy," says S. Ephrem. Every day we go in search of new pleasures, fresh food for our vanity, and nevertheless we hear the recital of the sufferings and ignominies which our GOD has endured for the love of us. We are puffed up with pride, we seek our ease, we cast off in cowardice the salutary yoke of penitence, although we feel ourselves weighed down beneath the burden of our sins, and yet we know that from love of us our SAVIOUR submitted to insults, spittings, the scourge, disgrace, and finally, to the most cruel death. The sinner lives in delights, and the Just one is nailed to the Cross! What subversion! O how terrible will be the account we shall have to give one day of such conduct!

Let us hasten then to prevent the awful consequences of these things by a sincere repentance. Let us go and cast ourselves at the Feet of JESUS, the Man of Sorrows, and let us ask grace of Him, to make amends for the past, and in future to respond to all His tenderness for us; let us go and confess at His Feet our sins, and let us say to Him with fervour that we will henceforth be His for ever. At the remembrance of our iniquities, let us unceasingly exclaim with the Prophet Jeremiah—"Oh

that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night."[1] Let us exclaim with holy King David, "LORD! deal not with us after our sins, nor reward us after our iniquities. O remember not against us former iniquities: let Thy tender mercies speedily prevent us: for we are brought very low. Heal us, O GOD of our salvation, for the glory of Thy Name: and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for Thy Name's sake."[2]

O my LORD! why do I not die with grief at the sad remembrance of the grief wherewith I have caused Thy heart to overflow, by my coldness, and above all by the sins of my past life! How often have I consigned myself to sleep, while deprived of Thy grace: how often have I had the insensate hardihood to sink to sleep without considering that I carried mortal sin in my breast, which like a horrible serpent tightened itself round my heart with long and fearful coils! How often, after receiving Thy forgiveness, and being restored to Thy friendship, have I ungratefully renewed my desertion of Thee with shameful baseness. I repent with my whole heart of so unworthy a conduct; yes, I repent of having thus outraged Thee. Vouchsafe to pardon me! . . . O my GOD, notwithstanding my baseness, my miseries, my weaknesses, I presume to say to Thee, I love Thee with all my strength, I love Thee with my whole soul. Oh, I beseech Thee, suffer me not to be unhappy enough to be separated from Thee by sin: JESU *dulcissime, ne permittas me separari a te!* My gentle LORD, hear me favourably: suffer me not to be ever separated from Thee, and rather to die, than to betray Thee anew.

[1] Jer. ix. 1. [2] Ps. lxxix. 8, 9.

Practical Resolutions.

ON THE MORTIFICATION OF THE BODY.

Would it be convenient, my dear Theotime, that thou shouldst live in the midst of the pleasures and joys of this world, when thy LORD JESUS CHRIST passed His whole life in the midst of sufferings? No, doubtless, and thou wouldst not consent to resemble so little Him Who is thy model. Apply thyself then to-day for the love of thy good SAVIOUR, to make progress in the virtue of mortification. Let not this word *mortification* terrify thee; because, for a generous soul which loves GOD, it is sweet, very sweet, to mortify self. Yes, a privation self-imposed to please JESUS, gives more real happiness to the soul than all the enjoyments of the world. Try, and thou wilt acknowledge the truth of what I advance.

There are two sorts of mortification: first, *the inward mortification*, which is the most difficult and the most necessary: secondly, *outward mortification*, which affords great help in acquiring the inward. Confine thyself for this day to the especial practice of outward mortification: the principal exercises whereof are these:—

1. *Mortification of the body in general.*—Refuse to thy body those too commodious and effeminate attitudes which argue of softness: if thy health permit, kneel in prayer, and without support: lie not in bed after the hour fixed for rising.

2. *Mortification of the eyes.*—Turn away thine eyes not only from forbidden objects, but likewise from all which thou canst not regard without some degree of peril. Be able to deny thyself the sight of things lawful and in-

different, when curiosity alone prompts thee to look upon them. O how pleasing a thing would it be to GOD, and an easy one to thyself, if thou wouldst sacrifice to Him as far as possible the opportunities of seeing fine houses, beautiful gardens, rich paintings! How wouldst thou thereby lay up treasure for thyself in heaven at a small cost! the opportunities of such sacrifices are so frequent.

3. *Mortification of speech.*—Never say a single word which may directly or indirectly offend the deep reverence due to GOD, or tarnish the reputation of thy neighbour. Alas! it is too much forgotten, even among people professing piety, that the most precious treasure belonging to our neighbour is his reputation. When the opportunity offers for thee to show forth thy wit, to display thy knowledge, to exhibit thy talents, learn to be silent for the love of JESUS CHRIST, unless charity or courtesy compel thee to speak. Hold back a useless speech ready to escape thy lips, or a word which would have gained thee some praise.

4. *Mortification of the hearing.*—Listen not to murmurings, slanders, railleries, light words, or those with double meaning, or in general to any speech whereby conscience might be anywise affected. Deprive thyself occasionally of the pleasure of hearing news, sweet voices, or pleasing harmony, and suffer patiently and contentedly whatever may fall painfully upon thy ear.

5. *Mortification of the smell.*—Give up willingly the pleasure thou mayest innocently derive from perfumes and pleasant odours.

6. *Mortification of the palate.*—Whether thou eat or drink, never do so from the pleasure thou findest therein.

Seek not for exquisite dishes, or dainty morsels, or delicious viands, which are the food of luxury and voluptuousness. If they serve thee with some badly dressed food, take advantage of so good an opportunity for mortifying thyself, and complain not of it, unless duty oblige thee to it. Deprive thyself sometimes of a dish which thou likest much, to take of another which thou dost less relish.

7. *Mortification of the touch.*—Suffer with joy, or at least with patience, cold, heat, and the other inconveniences of the air and seasons: however disagreeable they may be, murmur not therefore. Disquiet not thyself about any malady which may occur to thee, nor for aught which may cause thee bodily sufferings; for thou knowest that these are the means to render thee more pure, to cool thy passions, to promote penitence, and to give to GOD solid proofs of thy love.

These, my dear Theotime, are some very simple exercises of outward mortification: if thou love GOD truly, thou wilt find many others to practise, without nevertheless passing the limits of prudence.

CHAPTER XVI.

OF THE ARDENT DESIRE WHICH JESUS HAS HAD TO SUFFER FOR US.

"But I have a Baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished."—S. Luke xii. 50.

"With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you."—S. Luke xxii. 15.

WHAT forcible expressions! and which will depict the inconceivable desire which our LORD had to suffer and

offer Himself for us! One may see that they came from the abundance of the heart of Him Who has said, "I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled?"[1] O children of Adam, have ye heard these words of your GOD: "I am come to bring upon earth the fire of My love; and My most earnest desire is to see it kindled in the heart of every man!" O blessed JESU! where is the mighty good which the love of Thy creatures was to procure to Thee, that Thou shouldst have willed to die to obtain it, and that Thou shouldst have so much desired the moment of Thy death? "I must be baptized with the baptism of My Blood," didst Thou say to Thy disciples: "O! what acute agony do I feel until it be consummated!" Again I ask Thee, where was the great good which our love was to procure to Thee? and if all men love Thee, wilt Thou be thereby the greater?

No, My son, JESUS CHRIST replies to me, I shall neither be thereby greater, nor happier, nor more powerful: My happiness, power, and greatness, depend not on the love of My creatures: neither was it for Myself that I abased Myself in becoming incarnate, nor for Myself was I born in a stable, nor for Myself that I spent thirty years in a poor carpenter's shop, nor yet for Myself that I desired with great ardour to suffer and die upon the Cross. For thee it is, My son, for thee; I will to render thee happy, in giving thee My love. Wilt thou be ashamed to love a GOD Who alone can cause thy happiness, a GOD Who loads thee with good, a GOD Who loves thee with so much tenderness?

No, my gentle LORD, rather will I render Thee love

[1] S. Luke xii. 49.

for Thy love: I will love Thee with all my heart: vouchsafe to aid my weakness. O! when shall I be able to do for Thee as much as I have done for the world? When shall I labour for heaven as much as I have laboured for earth? when shall I yield to virtue all that I have given to my vices?

"With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you." Our blessed LORD was on the eve of His dolorous Passion: He was eating His last supper with His disciples when He addressed these words unto them. It was as though He had said to them, My dear children, and all ye men who shall live upon earth to the end of generations, behold, the hour of My sacrifice is approaching; My enemies at this moment are taking counsel against Me: they prepare Me a Cross. But before I die, I will this night give you new tokens of My love for you, and these I will give, in submitting Myself to the most cruel sufferings, to the most revolting ignominies, to the most infamous punishment. O, if ye knew with what desire I have desired this night. If ye knew how often I have called for it with aspirations, ye would comprehend both the strength of My love for you, and the intense desire I have to possess your hearts, in order to render them happy.

I see, O loving JESU, my kind SAVIOUR, Thou wilt possess my heart, at whatever price it may be! And what reason should I have to refuse it Thee? Is it not already for me too great an honour that Thou shouldst ask it of me? Have pity on me, O LORD, have pity on Thy poor creature, and help me in this; I ask of Thee neither riches, nor honour, nor pleasures, nor any other created thing; all these things without Thee are but pure

vanity, none of them can fill my heart. "How long wilt Thou forget me, O LORD, for ever? how long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me?"[1]

Practical Resolutions.

OF INWARD MORTIFICATION.

Since our LORD JESUS CHRIST so greatly desired to suffer, in order to show to thee His love, seek to-day the occasion to suffer something likewise for love of Him. Yesterday, my dear Theotime, I spoke to thee of outward mortification; now I will converse with thee of *inward mortification*. Forget not that without it no real progress in perfection can be attained; and although one may acquire a sort of factitious and exterior holiness, if I may so express myself, yet never a real holiness. This mortification consists in *conquering self;* and in how many combats must one not join, to arrive at this happy result! The following are the most important exercises thereof: be faithful to them, and thou wilt soon make real progress in holiness, and in the love of our good LORD.

1. *Mortification of the disposition and natural inclinations.*—Never perform an action merely because it pleases thee and is conformable to thy inclination: on the other hand, never omit a duty or a good work because thou feelest a disinclination to it. Bend always to the humour and taste of others upon all occasions, except when they ask of thee what is sinful. Deprive thyself from time to time of a lawful thing, and that because thine inclination

[1] Psalm xiii. 1.

leads thee to it. Pray to our LORD often to help thee to mortify thy tastes, because this sort of mortification is very difficult.

2. *Mortification of self-will.*—Seek to do, not thine own will, but that of thy superiors; choose not for thyself thy pursuits; leave the choice of these to others.[1] When thou feelest thyself drawn by a certain inward violence to do some particular thing, to which thy inclinations wholly prompt thee, mortify self by refraining from doing the thing, or by deferring it for some time. Resist unceasingly every thought of independence, and be persuaded that it is a thousand times better to obey than to command.

3. *Mortification of self-love.*—He who mortifies not his self-love is ever occupied with self, and acts but for himself. He is full of good opinion of himself, flatters himself that he possesses a thousand good qualities, regards himself with complacency, and readily believes that every one is thinking of him, and should be occupied about him. He esteems himself as highly and more so than others, and never approves of anything but that which he does himself. He interferes in everything, tries to have a share in everything, desires to seem the originator of everything. He has the greatest difficulty in submitting himself, esteems obedience in others only, cannot endure to be contradicted, obstinately seeks the fulfilment of his wishes, and conceives himself to have a great talent for commanding, because he greatly desires to do so. He is

[1] These advices are not intended to induce persons to shift the responsibility of their actions on others, in which many weak minds take refuge. They are rather intended as advices to people of strong wills who are desirous of perfection.—ED.

delighted when praises are bestowed upon him, and neglects nothing in order to gain them, taking, however, great pains to let no one know he desires them. He endures with regret to hear others praised; he praises them indeed sometimes himself, but only from flattery, or to serve some particular end. As he greatly fears contempt, he carefully conceals his imperfections. He everywhere seeks that which is most convenient to himself, without caring whether he inconveniences others. He has much tenderness and compassion for himself, in the least evils he endures, but is harsh and little touched by those of his brethren. Examine, my dear Theotime, by all these signs, if thou hast made some progress in mortification of self-love, and resolve henceforth to carry on a deadly warfare against it.

4. *Mortification of the passions.*—That which thou must first attack is thy ruling passion; when it shall have been subdued, all the others will become subdued of themselves. Take care to grant to thy passions nought of what they demand of thee, however slight, however much under control they appear to be: be ever distrustful of them, and never venture to believe them wholly extinguished, because they are ever shooting up again during life, and reappear quickly, when they have long been believed dead.

How many things to be done! thou wilt perhaps say to me: how many battles to be fought! what troubles! what crosses! True, but remember that life is short, that the day of recompense approaches, and that virtues are only acquired with much care, and with constant efforts. But it is far more painful to resist vices and passions than to endure bodily fatigues. That is also

true. However, remember that if thou persevere in fervour, and in that combat so painful to nature, thou wilt find great peace, and wilt feel thy labour lighter, by reason of the grace of GOD and the love of virtue. After all, GOD and heaven merit that we should suffer something for them.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LOVE OF JESUS TOWARDS US SHOWN IN THE INSTITUTION OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST TO BE THE NOURISHMENT AND CONSOLATION OF OUR SOULS.

"When JESUS knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the FATHER, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end."—S. John xiii. 1.

"Take, eat; THIS IS MY BODY."—S. Matth. xxvi. 26.

THE attachment of true friends becomes increased and redoubled at the moment of death, when they must part from beloved persons: for which reason they seek more earnestly to give them proofs of their affection, and have it at heart to leave them some pledge thereof. Our LORD, throughout His mortal life, had not ceased to give us tokens of His tenderness, He had shown us in a thousand ways how much He loved us: but when the hour had arrived that He must leave us to return to His FATHER, not satisfied with what He had already accomplished for love of us, not contented to shed for us even the last drop of His blood, He willed to do yet more; He willed to leave us a yet stronger proof of His burning love for us.

And what could be a stronger proof? Is it possible then to give more than life, to prove that we love? That which is impossible to man is not impossible to the loving-kindness of GOD. Hear then.

It was Thursday evening: JESUS, having eaten His last supper with His disciples, had now washed their feet. They were still lost in the contemplation of this wonderful instance of the humility of their good Master. Doubtless they then preserved a religious silence: doubtless they expected the accomplishment of some great mystery! doubtless, if they were attentive, they perceived upon the countenance of the SAVIOUR something greater, more sublime, more Divine than usual. . . . "JESUS took bread into His holy and venerable hands, and lifting up His eyes to heaven, offering thanks to GOD His Almighty FATHER, He blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; This is My Body."[1]

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE: My gentle SAVIOUR, suffer Thy poor creature to ask Thee what is the end that Thou proposest in concealing thus Thyself under the insignificant semblance of a morsel of Bread? Hast Thou not already sufficiently abased Thyself in Thine Incarnation, in descending from the height of heaven to clothe Thyself with our human nature, and with all the miseries, sin excepted, which are the sad portion thereof? What need is there that Thou shouldst thus again bring Thyself into nothing?

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED: My child, the love which I bear to all men, the love I bear to thyself, is

[1] The editor has ventured to omit a short paragraph here, fancying that it expressed too strongly the Latin technical definition of the Real Presence.

so great, that I have not been able to resolve to leave you comfortless upon earth.[1] As it was expedient for you that I should return into heaven, there to prepare a place for you,[2] I did before I left you summon My Omnipotence to aid My tenderness, and I thereby found a means to be ever with you here below, and at the same time to be in glory at the right hand of GOD My FATHER. Yes, I will be with you continually until the end of time, in order to be your support, your consolation, and the food of your souls. As long as a single drop of Adam's blood shall flow upon earth, love will keep Me captive here: I will ever say unto him whosoever will hear Me, "Come, eat of My bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled."[3] Come unto Me, O ye who hunger and thirst after righteousness, O ye who seek peace and happiness, O ye who feel the need of loving, come, and I will satisfy you. . . . "Take, eat: this is My Body;" the Body of your LORD—of your best friend. . . .

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE: O good JESUS, was it not enough to prove to us Thy love, that Thou didst draw us out of nothing, create us in Thine own Image, and purchase us with the price of Thy Blood? Was it then requisite that, lavish of Thyself, Thou shouldst give Thyself to us as food? "My GOD," exclaims a holy man, "is become my food! The Word of the Heavenly FATHER is my nourishment! The Wisdom of GOD the refreshment of my soul!" He Whom the angels behold but with trembling, Whose Brightness and Majesty they cannot endure, lo! He descends into my heart to unite Himself to me in the closest manner. O wonderful thing! a poor vile creature is nourished with the Body of its

[1] S. John xiv. 18. [2] S. John xiv. 2. [3] Prov. ix. 5.

LORD! O most gracious JESUS, suffer me to say to Thee, Thy love to us has passed all bounds, for "what is man that Thou art mindful of him?" "Every man living is altogether vanity!" and dust and ashes! And yet, O my GOD, Thou dost deign to cast upon him looks of loving-kindness, Thou deignest to invite him to Thy table, and feed him with Thine adorable Flesh: O suffer me to repeat to Thee, with many of Thy servants, Thy love for us has been infinite, surpassing all understanding.

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED: Doubtless, My son, but love stops not to consider that which is of convenience, when it will do good, and communicate itself to that which it loves. It goes, not where reason calls, but where ardour carries it. For this it is, that forgetting to regard My own glory, I have veiled Myself under the form of mean bread, in order to be the food of thy soul. Alas! what would have become of that poor soul, so weak, so frail, so inclined to evil, had I loved it less, had I not given Myself wholly to it, in the Sacrament of My love?

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE: O my JESU! Thy tenderness towards me covers me with shame and confusion, at the sight of my own ingratitude. O give me the grace to be no longer ungrateful, but to dedicate to Thee my body, my soul, my will, my liberty, my whole self. If in the past I have sought my own satisfaction, and that in causing Thee much displeasure, to-day I repent of it wholly, O my Beloved. Henceforth I will seek for nought else than Thee. O my GOD! Thou art my All, *Deus meus, et omnia,*—I will have but Thee only.

"He," says our Divine SAVIOUR, "that eateth My Flesh, and drinketh My Blood, dwelleth in Me, and I

in him."[1] What happiness, that the heart should possess such an inmate! What happiness for a soul which has received the Holy Communion to lay before Him its necessities, its miseries, to confide in Him its fears and its hopes, to reveal to Him its love! What happiness to discover to Him all its wounds, and to ask of Him the remedy for them! I have often tasted this happiness: how have I profited thereby? With what faith, love, humility, have I approached my GOD in the Sacrament of His love? What resolutions have I brought with me to Holy Communion? What benefit have I derived therefrom? One single Communion received aright is sufficient to make of a great sinner a true saint! . . . . Am I better, am I nearer to perfection after so many communions? What faults have I corrected? what graces have I acquired or increased? To communicate monthly, weekly, or even more frequently, and to lead withal a life as imperfect, as unmortified, as dissipated as ever, is cause indeed for trembling! To receive so often the Body of my LORD humbled and brought low for love of me, and to continue ever filled with pride, vanity, self-love, what a cause for shame is here!

O LORD JESUS, I beseech Thee, deal not with me after my sins. Alas, if Thou. shouldst be extreme to mark one by one my iniquities, my ingratitude, my acts of irreverence towards the Sacrament of Thy love for us, could I bear such scrutiny? No, my GOD! I confess to Thee, "I cannot answer Thee one of a thousand."[2] Neither will I attempt to justify the coldness with which I receive Thee in the Holy Communion, for I know that if I were to say I am innocent, Thou wouldst speedily convict me of

[1] S. John vi. 56. [2] Job ix. 3.

lying and folly. I prefer then to confess to Thee my fault, and mourn over it before Thee, O gracious SAVIOUR of my soul! I am inexcusable. Have I been so many times fed with the Body of CHRIST Himself, and am I yet cold in His service, and so little sensible of His love? Have I received so often the LORD of all purity and holiness, and am I still frightfully covered with the stains of thousands of sins and imperfections? To use the language of S. Chrysostom, I ought to be, when retiring from the Holy Table, like a lion exhaling the fire of Divine love: I ought to be an object of terror and alarm to all the powers of hell, and yet so it is, that after having communicated, I am, by a sort of diabolical miracle, as cold, as imperfect, as unmortified, as impatient as before. O my GOD, what shall I say in the great Day of Judgment? what excuse shall I have to allege when Thou shalt set before my eyes, on the one hand the graces which I might have drawn from one single communion, and on the other the numerous sins of which I notwithstanding have not ceased to render myself guilty?

What then shall I do? shall I despair? shall I forsake Holy Communion? Assuredly not. But I will prepare for it more carefully, I will bring to it more recollection, more humility, more love, I will sacrifice to my GOD everything which He requires, and throw myself upon His mercy in all the rest.[1]

Yes, O gracious JESUS! at the feet of Thy mercy I will cast myself; in Thy Divine heart I will seek my refuge. I have deeply offended Thee since I have been on earth: I have bitterly aggrieved Thee. Like another prodigal child, I have caused Thee to weep much over my flight

[1] Hebrews iv. 16.

and my wanderings: I, ungrateful and unnatural, have treated Thee as though Thou wert my most cruel enemy, and yet, behold! Thou consentest still to receive me into the number of Thy children: Thou commandest me to sit at Thy table. Alas! I have doubtless abused so distinguished a favour. I have, perhaps, even used Thy blessings to offend Thee the more. O good JESUS! if I should have been so unhappy as to outrage Thee to this degree, deign to accept my heartfelt repentance: vouchsafe to forgive me all. And since, through exceeding love for me, Thou permittest me to receive Thee so often into the poor dwelling of my heart, give me grace to receive Thee therein henceforth with ardent love, and a sincere regret that I serve Thee thus unworthily. O, my good Master, my loving Brother, my best Friend, my Hope! O that I might henceforth repair by my fervour all the grief I have caused Thee by my lukewarm Communions. O good JESUS, favourably hear my desire, and have compassion upon me.

O how sweet are the tears shed by a poor sinner at the feet of JESUS, at the remembrance of his past sins! O JESUS, when I meditate upon the love Thou showest us in leaving Thy Body and Blood in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, to console us in this world of grief and exile, I am as though beside myself. Words fail me in expressing what I feel, and I blush with shame that I love Thee so little. Thou dwellest among us as though Thou wert our equal: Thou abidest as willingly in the smallest village as in the most populous cities. If one of the sheep of Thy flock is in distress, Thou hastenest to afford it consolation. If it lies stretched out in anguish, Thou goest Thyself to visit it, Thou sharest its sufferings.

If it be about to yield up its last breath, Thou hastenest to it, encouraging it to offer up its life, and soothing by Thy presence the terrors of death. O Jesus! how ineffable is Thy love for man! When shall we respond to it? when shall we love Thee as we ought justly to love Thee? Give us this grace, O loving Saviour, and to me especially, who need it most of all. Amen. So be it.

Practical Resolutions.

RULES WITH REGARD TO COMMUNION.

This day thou shouldst make two resolutions of great importance, and be henceforth very faithful to them.

1. Each time that thou hast the happiness to communicate, prepare thyself for this great action as thou wouldst do if thou wast sure of dying immediately afterwards. Read from time to time, with attention, the short instruction which you are accustomed to study before and after Communion, and take heed lest thou do it in a formal and perfunctory manner.

2. Acquire the holy habit of performing what is called "Spiritual Communion:" it consists in desiring to receive Jesus Christ into the heart, and to converse familiarly with Him as if thou hadst really received Him. Very abundant graces are annexed to this extremely simple and easy exercise. We may renew Spiritual Communion as often as we wish it in the course of the day.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SORROW OF OUR LORD IN THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE: THE BLOODY SWEAT: HIS RESIGNATION TO THE WILL OF GOD.

"O ye who pass by, behold and see if any sorrow be like unto My Sorrow."—Lam. i. 12.

AND now begins the bloody career of the Passion of our Divine SAVIOUR! and now it is that we shall see this good Master a prey to a thousand torments for love of us.

After the institution of the Sacrament of the Eucharist, and after the last instructions given to His beloved Apostles, JESUS,—to Whom nothing remained on earth to be done, save to suffer and die,—came out, and went as He was wont to the Mount of Olives; and His disciples also followed Him.[1] As the moment of conflict approached, He willed for our instruction to prepare Himself for it by prayer and supplication. He saith then unto the disciples, "Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee."[2] But scarcely had He entered the most retired spot of the garden, when He began to be "sorrowful, and very heavy;" a lassitude and indescribable sadness possessed His soul; and this sadness was so great, that He Who had never complained of aught,—He Who so much loved to suffer, yet felt constrained to say to His

[1] S. Matth. xxvi. 36; S. Luke xxii. 39.
[2] S. John xviii. 1; S. Mark xiv. 32.

three chosen apostles, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death."

Having thus confidingly addressed them, He left them, and came forward a little, and there began anew to pray. But His sadness, fears, and anguish still increased; and the conflicts He had to endure were so violent, that a sweat of blood issued from His whole Body! Moreover, the violence of His fears caused Him to sink into a deathlike agony.[1] But, LORD, is it not Thou Who gavest to Thy martyrs so great a joy in their sufferings, that they attained to the contempt of torments and of death itself? S. Agatha went to prison and to death as to a marriage feast; S. Tiburtinus walked upon burning coals as if upon flowers; S. Andrew the Apostle had no sooner perceived the cross which was to be the instrument of his torture, than he cried out, in a transport of consolation and joy, "O precious cross, that hast been honoured and consecrated by the adorable Body of my SAVIOUR! O good cross! so long desired, ardently loved, continually sought, I at length find prepared for my eager embraces! I come to thee with joy and assurance. O take me out of this miserable world, and restore me to my dear Master, JESUS CHRIST, that He may receive me from thy arms, since by thy means He has redeemed me." When they sought to unbind him from his cross at the end of two days, he, being yet alive, cried out, "Suffer not, O LORD, that they should take me hence, or that I should have the humiliation of dying elsewhere than upon Thy Cross." S. Vincent, in his martyrdom, was tortured upon the wooden horse, torn with iron hooks, burnt with blades of

[1] "And His sweat was as it were great drops of blood." (S. Luke xxii. 44; S. Mark xiv. 33.)

fire: and yet, according to S. Augustine, he spoke with so much firmness to the tyrant, that there appeared to be two Vincents, one suffering, and the other speaking. Whilst S. Laurence was being burnt alive, stretched upon iron rails, "the inward fire of divine love," says S. Leo, "was more powerful to comfort his soul, than the outward fire was to consume his body." Wherefore he exclaimed to the tyrant, "If thou wilt eat my flesh, behold it is roasted, take and eat it!" O my JESUS, it is thus Thou strengthenest Thy martyrs in the midst of their conflicts, by the sweetness of Thy love, and Thou dost reserve for Thyself only weakness and fears. Wherefore, in giving so great joy to Thy servants in their torments, dost Thou take for Thine own portion so great a sorrow?

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED: O My son, if I have groaned, if I have trembled, and been overwhelmed by so heavy a sorrow in the garden of Gethsemane, it was for love of thee, and for thy consolation. If the sight of the ignominious death which awaited Me caused Me so great an anguish, it was to teach thee that I had taken upon Myself all the infirmities of man, and that death had its terrors for Me as well as for him. . . . . But alas! I had many other causes to be sorrowful unto death. First, I beheld Myself laden with the sins of all men. Oh, who can count the number of these sins? I beheld them all distinctly; not one escaped Me. I well knew all their malignity; I knew what wrong they do to GOD, and with what horror they inspire Him. And it was with this immense burden of all the crimes which ever have been, and which ever shall be, committed, that I appeared before My FATHER. The shame and grief which possessed My soul by reason of the burden of these sins was so ex-

cessive, that it required a miracle of My Omnipotence that I died not. My son, if thou couldst realise the holiness of GOD, and the hideousness of sin whereby He is offended, thou wouldst not wonder at My sorrow, and thou wouldst comprehend how it could cause an abundant pouring forth of blood from every part of My Body.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE: LORD, have I then likewise contributed, by my iniquities, to increase Thy sorrow? Hast Thou then equally borne the burden of my sins?

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED: Yes, My son. The pleasure which thou hast desired, sought, and unhappily found in so many sins of thy past life, was that which penetrated My soul with deadly sorrow, and caused Me that bloody sweat, which reduced Me to so bitter an agony. And now, O My son, I ask thee,—I, thy GOD, yet thy Brother also, ask thee, Canst thou still love such pleasure? Wilt thou renew My griefs?

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE: LORD, I cast myself at Thy feet, confused, humbled, and abased; I confess to Thee my ingratitude, and my perfidy. Give me pardon. Alas! my accursed sins have severally weighed down Thy heart with grief and sadness. Is this then the reward I have rendered for the love Thou hast manifested in dying for me? O my GOD, give me a share of the grief Thou enduredst for my sins in the garden of Gethsemane, in order that it may keep me in compunction throughout my whole life. My gracious Redeemer, O that I might, by my penitence and love, gladden Thee for the future as much as I have grieved Thee hitherto. I repent with my whole heart that I have preferred my paltry gratifications unto Thee! Draw me daily more

and more to Thy love, by the odour of Thy perfumes, which are the sweet inspirations of Thy grace; and cause me to persevere in Thy service, even to my latest breath.

My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. That which chiefly caused the deep sorrow of JESUS, was in that He foresaw the inutility of His labours, sufferings, and death for the greater part of men. Already an infinite number of these were burning in hell, although the benefits of His death had been applied to them; and He foresaw that many other men, even in the ages of Christianity, and with so many heavenly gifts, would nevertheless be lost. He foresaw that the number of the elect would be the smallest number; that men would serve Him with a slavish fear; that after His many tokens of love they would offend Him; that they would yield Him for His service the bare letter of the commandments, and that only from the fear of damnation. He foresaw all this, as it were, in spite of Himself, He sank into despondency. In the midst of so many interior griefs, whither did JESUS CHRIST go to seek for solace? In and with His FATHER, and Him only. O how excellent an example has He given us here that we should follow it!

"Our Divine SAVIOUR," says a good man, "leaves the multitude of His disciples at the entrance of the garden. Of what good are many witnesses and repositories of our sorrows? It fatigues and burdens them to be so. They have their crosses as we have: if it be not to-day, yet another day: these give us no real solace. After a few minutes of comfort from unburdening of our minds to them, we return into ourselves, troubled as before, and laden with the remorse of many new sins.

"JESUS CHRIST takes with Him three disciples. In

our internal troubles we may go to some chosen friend, and say to him, 'Give me advice, and pray for me, I beseech thee.' And this is purely to seek GOD in man; but to go to imperfect friends is to seek the world.

"In another instant JESUS CHRIST leaves even these three friends. Human consolation, sought at first in GOD, might become earthly if of too long duration. Let us, therefore, speedily return to GOD.

"But His prayer, what was it? Prostrated upon the earth, either the better to show His reverence, or from not having the strength to support Himself, He said, 'O My FATHER, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt.'[1]

"There is nothing more Divine than when much dread of suffering is united to the greatest resignation. Had JESUS CHRIST appeared to have less difficulty in submission, we should have said, 'I cannot imitate Him.' But now, when we are in grief, let us bemoan ourselves; let us pour out our heart before GOD, for all this is permitted to us; but let us be always resigned.

"The prayer of JESUS was short: 'My FATHER, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done.' However afflicted we may be, had we our heart on our lips, we may yet say this.

"JESUS continued to repeat this same prayer as long as His agony lasted, and until an angel came to console Him.[2] Let us imitate Him: nothing is obtained but through perseverance.

"His prayer was loving: My FATHER! . . . . For He is our FATHER, though He afflict us. Let Him then

[1] S. Matth. xxvi. 39. [2] S. Luke xxii. 43.

deal with me as He will: I fear nought but the strokes of an angry Judge.

"His prayer was conditional: Deliver Me, if it be possible, and if Thou judgest it right. If He had spoken to another than to a FATHER, He would have said authoritatively, 'Deliver Me from death!' But He speaks otherwise. My FATHER knows better than I know what is suitable to me; He can do all, and He loves me. Let Him then deal hardly with me, if it be His good pleasure. 'Sæviat quantum vult: Pater est.'"

Whosoever we be, how often in the course of life shall we need to practise these important lessons!

Let us go to GOD, in Him we find all; and once again let us go only to GOD, or to GOD'S ministers.

At Thy feet, O my SAVIOUR, I make this resolution! Whenever it shall please Thee to send me some cross, some affliction, it is to Thee that I will have recourse, to Thee I will go to be comforted. Thou art my Master and best Friend; I can therefore in all things trust myself wholly to Thee. O my JESUS, strike, chastise me in this life! me, a guilty one, who have so often deserved hell, and do with me whatsoever shall seem good in Thine eyes.[1] My heart is ready, my heart is ready to receive from Thy hand adversity as well as prosperity. Behold me in Thy presence, I give myself up to Thy mercy, and leave myself in Thy hands; for I know that all must needs be good which Thou wilt do with me. If Thou wilt that I be in darkness, Thy Name be praised; if Thou wilt that I be in light, be Thy Name yet praised; if Thou vouchsafest to comfort me, be Thou blessed; and if Thou wilt that I suffer tribulations, be Thou equally blessed.

[1] 1 Sam. iii. 18.

I will suffer willingly for Thee all Thou willest should come upon me. I will receive indifferently at Thy hand good and evil, sweetness and bitterness, joy and sadness; and render Thee thanks for all which shall happen to me. Preserve me for ever from all sin, and I shall fear neither death nor hell. Provided Thou wilt not cast me off, nor efface me from the Book of Life, no tribulation can harm me. Provided I may love Thee, all the rest is unimportant. O gracious JESUS, give me Thy love, and the grace of resignation.

Practical Resolutions.

SUBMISSION TO THE WILL OF GOD.

To do the will of GOD, this is holiness: this is perfection: except this, all else is delusion. Learn to submit always to His holy will.

1. Concerning health or sickness: art thou suffering, or nailed to a bed of pain, say, "My GOD willeth it, I will it likewise."

2. Concerning interior consolation, or desolation: GOD knows better than thou what is good for thy soul.

3. Concerning poverty and riches: if thou art rich, thou must know that riches are accompanied by sorrow, that they are often an insupportable burden, and expose thee to numerous dangers: submit thyself then to the will of GOD, Who has judged right to make thee, not the master and owner, but the trustee only, of the treasures thou hast received for the poor, as well as for thyself. If thou art poor, submit thyself gladly to all the privations of thy state, because it is GOD Who permits them. Cold and heat, hunger and thirst, labour and fatigue, and the

sweat of the brow, with the contempt and disdain of the rich, are the lot of the poor; in the eyes of the world it is a sorrowful portion, but it is not so in the eye of faith. O my GOD, what grace may be acquired when, in the lap of poverty, and of numberless privations, we say from the bottom of the heart, "LORD, may Thy will be done."

4. Submit thyself likewise to the will of GOD in what concerns seasons: never murmur because it rains too long or too frequently, or because the dryness of the weather destroys thy harvest, &c. None of these murmurs change the order of things, but they offend GOD. Finally, submit thyself to His adorable will in all that concerns thee: content thyself with what it has pleased GOD to grant thee, of health, of talents, of advantages of body and mind, of virtues, of holiness, and in this, as in all the rest, say unceasingly, "LORD, I indeed desire only that which Thou willest for me Thyself."

Prayer

TO JESUS IN AGONY IN THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE, TO ASK OF HIM THE GIFT OF A BLESSED DEATH.

O JESUS my SAVIOUR! I implore Thee by that bitter grief which possessed Thy soul in the garden of Gethsemane, come to my aid when my soul, on the point of quitting my body, shall be filled with dread at the sight of Thy awful judgment. Vouchsafe to strengthen me then by hope in Thy mercy: send to me Thy holy angel to defend me against the assaults and temptations of the devil. Let the virtue of Thy sufferings give me strength to endure length of sickness, and violence of grief or pain,

without regret, murmurs, or impatience. Cause my soul to abide ever perfectly submissive to Thy will, and to accept alike, for love of Thee, health and sickness, adversity and prosperity, death and life, and continually to repeat in all circumstances, "My GOD, Thy will, not mine, be done."[1] I ask Thee not, O LORD, to send me an easy death, or tolerable pains, or slight sicknesses: all this I leave to Thy wisdom, that Thou mayest allot them to me, not according to my desire, but according to my needs, and to what is best for me. What I do ask of Thee, what I implore Thee to grant me, is the favour of receiving in my last sickness all the aids which religion can afford, and that I may expire with these words, proceeding from the depth of my heart: "JESUS, I commend my soul into Thy hands: JESUS, I love Thee with my whole heart. Amen."

CHAPTER XIX.

JESUS, BETRAYED BY THE TRAITOR JUDAS, IS BOUND WITH CORDS LIKE A THIEF.

"Then took they JESUS, and bound Him."—S. John xviii. 12.

THE traitor Judas had determined to betray JESUS. Accompanied by a cohort of Roman soldiers, and by a crowd of attendants provided with lanterns and staves, he advanced towards the garden of Gethsemane, where he knew his Divine Master was wont to go and pray towards

[1] S. Mark xiv. 36.

evening.[1] While going along he said to those who followed him, "As ye know not JESUS of Nazareth, observe well, for to whomsoever I shall give a kiss, that same is He: take Him, and lead Him away safely."[2] The sign and the counsel were worthy of Judas. After such well-concerted measures, he enters the garden, leaving his band at some distance, he recognises JESUS his SAVIOUR, runs to Him, and saying to Him, "Hail, Master," salutes Him with a kiss.[3] The Lamb of GOD refused not this kiss, which was to Him as cruel perhaps as any of the other sufferings of His Passion; but as He knew the design of this unhappy one, He, with the intention of regaining him, and causing him to recollect himself, said to him with a gentleness which would have softened and converted an ordinary wretch: "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?"[4]

After these words, He advanced some steps towards the band, which awaited Him, and said to them, "Whom seek ye?" They answered, "JESUS of Nazareth." JESUS said, "I am He. Ye may seize My Person, since your hatred is to Me; I suffer you to do it; but let these go their way," He added, signifying His disciples, "and trouble them not."[5]

O most loving JESUS, it is thus that upon every occasion Thou choosest to testify the love which Thou bearest to us. Thine enemies come to bind Thee, and to drag Thee to death, and Thou, without thinking of flight or self-defence, art engrossed alone with the care of Thy dear disciples: Thou endurest all which Thine enemies do

[1] S. Matth. xxvi. 47; S. John xviii. 2.
[2] S. Mark xiv. 44.
[3] S. Matth. xxvi. 49.
[4] S. Luke xxiii. 48.
[5] S. John xviii. 4, 5, 8.

against Thee, and forbiddest them to hurt those who love Thee. O JESUS! happy is it to serve so kind a Master as Thou art! happy to rest tranquilly upon Thy love the care of all which concerns us. I will, indeed, place in Thee an unlimited confidence, I will give myself up to Thee unreservedly. Thou art my Protector, and Thou watchest unceasingly over me. Who shall be able to make me tremble, or of what shall I be afraid? What! shall a prince when surrounded by his guard fear nothing! a mortal when guarded by mortals like himself feel secure? and shall I fear when my GOD takes care of me? O no, my LORD, I will for ever have confidence in Thee. Though all hell should be set loose against me, I will yet put my trust in Thee. With Thee I have nought to fear from its fury, and he cannot take from me that which Thou hast given me.

But the soldiers threw themselves upon JESUS, bound Him tightly with cords, and dragged Him away with fury.[1]

O heavens, behold the LORD of heaven in fetters! Holy angels of Paradise, what must have been your sentiments, when ye saw your King, with His hands bound behind His back, walking in the midst of the soldiers, and in this situation traversing the streets of Jerusalem! And Thou, O JESUS! wherefore didst Thou consent to let Thyself be bound by men whom Thou hadst Thyself created, and laden with every sort of benefit? "Quid tibi et vinculis?" sadly exclaims S. Bernard. What have the bonds of wretches like these in common with Thee, Who art of infinite goodness and majesty? It is to us these fetters belong, even to us ungrateful, to us sinners

[1] S. John xviii. 12.

condemned to hell! and not to Thee, the Holy of holies, even innocence itself. . . . But, O blessed JESUS, I behold Thy goodness: Thou hast willed to let Thyself be bound as a slave, in order to give us a new proof of Thy love. Thou hast willed to suffer this unworthy treatment to give us an admirable example of gentleness, and to fulfil that prophecy of Isaiah, "He was sacrificed because He willed it."

O my soul! Behold thy GOD, laden with chains, and dragged by a vile populace to the houses of Annas and Caiaphas. They seized His sacred Person, and He offered no resistance: they tied His hands, and He spoke not a word: they commanded Him to walk towards Jerusalem, and He obeyed: the soldiers in their brutal impatience pushed Him harshly, dragged Him cruelly to make Him go on more speedily, and He proffered no threat,—uttered no complaint. He preserved the same tranquillity and meekness: He was an innocent Lamb, being led to the slaughter; He was silent and suffered with humility. What a holy model for me! Shall it now be difficult for me to fetter my will and to submit to the will of my superiors? Shall it cost me much to obey them regularly? to do, not what pleases me, but what they judge right for me to do? to go, not where I wish to go, but where their commands send me? Shall I still show myself perverse, perhaps even little submissive, argumentative, and rebellious? No, my GOD: henceforth I will obey more perfectly, in order to please Thee better. Vouchsafe to assist my weakness.

O JESUS, my beloved: I would embrace the cords which bind Thee, for it is they which have delivered me from the eternal chains I have merited. Miserable that I

am! how often have I renounced Thy friendship, dishonouring Thee by my sins! I repent with my whole heart of this so great wrong. O my God, if I have thus outraged Thee, it is because I have preferred my own will to Thine. O cursed self-will! Take, O Jesus, this rebellious will of mine: I resign it wholly unto Thee. Bind it to Thy feet by the gentle bonds of Thy holy love, in order that it may choose nothing but what Thou Thyself wilt. Cause me to seek with as much ardour to be pleasing unto Thee, as Thou seekest to procure my happiness. I renounce all, for Thou sufficest me. O why have I so late known and loved Thee? Give me the grace to repair by the fervency of my love for Thee all the time I have lost in loving creatures. Amen.

Practical Resolutions.

UPON MEEKNESS.

Meekness is a virtue pleasing to every one, but not very common. Many there are who imagine they possess it, and greatly deceive themselves; they are full of meekness and sweetness so long as no one offends them, but if unfortunately they are wounded ever so little, this pretended meekness vanishes, and gives place to anger and resentment. My dear Theotime, endeavour vigorously not to be of this number: let thy meekness be ever alike under all circumstances. If thou art despised, insulted, or wronged, take heed thou give not way to anger, but follow the precept of the Apostle, and "recompense to no man evil for evil."[1] Carefully avoid every sort of contest

[1] Rom. xii. 17, 14; 1 S. Pet. iii. 9.

and dispute; and in order to this, defer readily to the opinion of others, and do not contradict them. Sacrifice thy tastes, inclinations, and pleasures, rather than be obliged to contend with thy neighbour. If duty or charity should sometimes oblige thee to contradict others, let it be always with the greatest discretion. Be ever ready to forgive those who aggrieve thee, and show them a countenance cheerful, open, and smiling. Reprove no one harshly, whoever he be, and do not confound wise firmness with sharpness and hardness. Be not one of those strange characters which are angry and grow irritated at a trifle, or a slight raillery, or nothing: but accustom thyself to take everything in good part for the love of CHRIST, and to smile kindly even whilst thou feelest thy anger to be rising and struggling in thy soul. In a word, be always good, affable, kind, courteous, ready to inconvenience thyself, in order not to inconvenience others, but rather to do them service. O how happy wouldst thou be in the possession of this lovely grace of meekness! It was the chosen virtue of our loving SAVIOUR. He testified how dear a thing to Him was meekness, by doing good to the ungrateful, by replying with benevolence to those who contradicted Him, by enduring uncomplainingly wrongs and ill-treatment. Imitate His example, my dear Theotime, and forget not that we do ourselves more harm in being irritated at wrongs than these same wrongs could do us. Deal then meekly with others; nay more, deal meekly with thyself. S. Francis de Sales says, "Certain people, after falling into some fault, are indignant with, and worry themselves, and thereby render themselves guilty of a thousand other faults." "The devil," says another good man, "always fishes in troubled water."

In beholding therefore thy falls, miseries, and imperfections, beware lest thou become disquieted, because such disquietude can only be the effect of pride, and of the high opinion thou hast conceived of thy own virtue; but humble thyself, and detest thy sin dispassionately, and have recourse immediately to GOD, expecting from His goodness alone the help needful to keep thee from again falling into it.

CHAPTER XX.

JESUS IS STRUCK BY ONE OF THE OFFICERS OF THE HIGH PRIEST.

"One of the officers which stood by struck JESUS with the palm of his hand."—S. John xviii. 22.

OUR Divine SAVIOUR had just been brought before Caiaphas, who being High Priest that year, "asked JESUS of His disciples and of His doctrine."[1] "JESUS answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort, and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou Me? Ask them which heard Me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said."[2] This answer was worthy of that same wisdom that proffered it. But one of the officers of the High Priest who was beside Him turned to JESUS, and said to Him with insolence, "Answerest Thou the High Priest so?" at the same time

[1] S. John xviii. 19. [2] S. John xviii. 20, 21.

he struck Him.[1] Struck Him! O heavenly spirits, where are ye? blessed angels, what do ye? how endure ye this affront offered to your King?

This officer deserved to be severely punished for the ill-usage he had just heaped upon the LORD JESUS: but the High Priest approved by his silence this most brutal action. Alas! it would seem that the earth should have opened to engulf that unhappy one: it would seem that JESUS should have made that insolent one to feel Him to be his GOD: but no! the gentle LORD, Who was ever consumed by the desire to show forth His love to us, and to leave salutary examples that we should follow, suffered this affront with patience, and only replied to him who struck Him that He might thereby avoid reproach, by showing that He had not failed in respect to the High Priest. Then Caiaphas, continuing his interrogations, asked JESUS if He were in truth the SON of GOD. "And JESUS said, I am. Then the High Priest rent his clothes and saith, Ye have heard the blasphemy: and they all condemned Him to be guilty of death."[2]

When the judges had pronounced this iniquitous sentence of death, our Divine SAVIOUR was left to the keeping of the servants and personal attendants. These mercenary minds would have thought they ill served their masters had they been satisfied with guarding Him; they considered it their duty to outrage Him. "Then they began to spit on His face, and to buffet Him. And they blindfolded Him, and the others smote Him with the palms of their hands, saying, Prophesy unto us, Thou CHRIST, who is he that smote Thee?"[3] This scene oc-

[1] S. John xviii. 22. [2] S. Mark xiv. 62—64.
[3] S. Mark xiv. 65; S. Luke xxii. 63, 64; S. Matth. xxvi. 68.

cupied the rest of the night, during which He Whom the angels adore was made the sport of the low rabble. We do not read in the history of our SAVIOUR's Passion that He opposed a word to so many outrages, for indeed He uttered not one. If the Evangelists do not always formally assert it, the prophets assure us thereof, and this His wonderful patience is contradicted by none. But what renders it more marvellous, and what we shall remark here, respecting all that our SAVIOUR endured in the course of His Passion, is this truth: viz., all which He suffered He deeply felt and realised. We speak not only of His bodily sufferings, of which the perfect constitution of His frame rendered Him so susceptible, but likewise of all, that in the depth of His soul He felt of the shame of contempt,—of the bitterness of derision,—of the wrongs of ill-treatment,—of the degradation of indignities. Of all these He tasted to their dregs, according to that which was written of Him. One may judge thereby how much He must have had to suffer throughout that dreadful night, of which the remembrance alone produces in pious minds so lively a compassion, and such abundant tears. Indeed S. Jerome thinks that all the sorrows and insults that JESUS suffered during that night, will only be known at the day of the great Judgment.

O my LORD! when I behold Thee suffering for love of me the most unworthy treatment, have I not cause to blush in feeling myself still so weak, so cowardly, so pusillanimous, when it is question of suffering for Thee the smallest affronts, and the slightest insults? I make great resolutions, I form fine projects of amendment, and yet at the first word, however little it hurt me, I am disturbed, and I perceive myself to be much weaker than I imagined.

O good JESU! I have recourse to Thee; deign to teach me to receive meekly, and even joyfully, all the wrongs, contradictions, and ill-treatments of which I may be the object. Teach me never to defend myself by harsh and sharp words, but to overcome the evil proceedings of others towards me by my silence; or else, if charity should command me to speak, give me grace to reply to my adversaries with a meekness and gentleness capable of appeasing them, and of winning their hearts to me. O my SAVIOUR, give me patience, humility, and above all, Thy holy love. With Thy love, O JESUS, I shall possess all the rest; refuse it not to me, that at last I may say to Thee in all truthfulness, "My GOD, I love Thee." Amen.

Practical Resolutions.

OF LONG-SUFFERING.

Let us speak to-day of long-suffering. What constitutes it essentially is patience in enduring contempt, and humiliation. "The greater number," says S. Francis of Assisium, "make their holiness to consist in the recitation of numerous prayers, and in the mortification of their senses; but they cannot bear an insulting word. They do not understand that a soul has more merit in enduring an affront without wrath, than it could derive from ten days of fasting upon bread and water."

"There are three things," says S. Bernard, "that he who inclines to holiness ought to labour to acquire; 1st, not to seek for power; 2ndly, to submit willingly to every one; 3rdly, to put up with injuries patiently."

For instance, dear Theotime, should what is granted to

others be refused to thee,—their speech be listened to while thine is derided,—should praise, honourable employment, important offices be for them, and for thee indifference, neglect, injustice, and raillery, thou wilt then be truly meek and humble of heart, if thou acceptest with calmness and resignation all these humiliations, and if thou thankest GOD for them. What thou shouldst do in these moments of interior conflict, is, not to fly into a passion, but to accept all these slights as the just punishment of thy sins. He who has offended GOD deserves from Him much more; he deserves to be trampled under foot by demons. Above all, my dear Theotime, irritate not thyself when thou art reproved for some fault or defect. "The proud," says Rodriguez, "when they are reproved, do as hedgehogs do, which as soon as they be touched, prick up their sharp bristles; that is to say, they become furious, spend themselves in complainings, reproaches, and imprecations. The lowly, on the contrary, humble themselves the more, confess their weaknesses, thank those who reprove them, and do not become irritated. Alas! he who cannot receive a reproof without resentment, proves that he is still under the dominion of pride!" My dear Theotime, in order to obtain these two graces of meekness and humility, say often to our LORD, "O JESUS, meek and lowly of heart, make my heart like unto Thine."

CHAPTER XXI.

S. Peter thrice denies his Divine Master. His Repentance.

"And Peter went out and wept bitterly."—S. Luke xxii. 62.

O how deeply must it have pierced the heart of Jesus, to have been thus denied by S. Peter! S. Peter, the first of the Apostles, honoured by the especial confidence of his Master, basely denies Him Whom formerly he had promised to follow unto death!

O Jesus, devoted to punishment, and declared infamous: reus est mortis! Jesus, covered with the spittle of a vile populace! Jesus, treated with the utmost derision by an impious and furious troop of servants! Jesus, wearied with ignominies, sorrows, insults, and reproaches! Jesus, already forsaken by Thine own disciples,[1] wherefore hast Thou permitted that the denial of S. Peter should add to Thy griefs? It was because Thy love would give us a great lesson. Thou wouldst teach us, by the fall of Thine Apostle, to avoid presumption, to mistrust our own strength, and never to rest but on Thee. Thou wouldst teach us to fear our own weakness, and not to consider even long years passed in Thy service as a motive of security.

"When pride cometh," said the wise man, "then cometh a fall."[2] We have just seen in S. Peter the proof of this truth; for when our Lord told His disciples, on the eve of His Passion, that He was about to be an occasion of offence to all, S. Peter replied, "Though all men

[1] S. Mark xiv. 50. [2] Prov. xvi. 18.

shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended."[1] Doubtless these words were inspired by the love which he bore to his Master; but alas! some degree of presumption mixed with them: he relied too much upon his own strength. Therefore what happened? GOD, Who cannot endure pride, even in His friends, whatever be the form it takes, abandoned him to his own weakness, and the unhappy Apostle fell.

O my GOD, how terrible does this fall appear! An Apostle, the first of Apostles, to deny his Master! O good JESUS, have compassion upon me. Even stars have fallen from heaven, what then can I, dust of the earth, expect? They, whose works seemed praiseworthy, have fallen as low as man can fall; and I have seen some who were fed with angels' food delight themselves with the husks of swine! There is, then, O LORD, no holiness, if Thou withdraw Thine hand: no chastity is secure, if Thou defend it not; no vigilance can avail us, if Thou Thyself watch not over us. For if we be left by Thee, we sink and perish. Come to us, and we arise and live. We totter, but Thou strengthenest us; we are lukewarm, but Thou kindlest us. O what humble and low thoughts should I not entertain of myself! How little should I esteem that which appears good in me! How deeply should I abase myself, O LORD, before Thy unfathomable judgment, wherein I find myself to be nothingness, mere nothingness! O immensity of weight! O sea without a shore, wherein self cannot exist, but disappears as nothingness in the centre of Infinity! Where then shall pride conceal itself? Where self-complacency? O my GOD, all vanity is extinguished in the depth of

[1] S. Matth. xxvi. 33.

Thy judgments! But when I behold, in the depths of my heart, the strength which I possess for doing evil, I tremble, and am seized with fear and terror; and I feel that my whole confidence and hope lie in Thy mercy. O good LORD, I beseech Thee have compassion on me, and leave me not to my corruption. Alas! I should betray Thee still.

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED: Thou art right, My son, to distrust thy weakness, and not to presume upon thy own strength; but I will not that this distrust should fill thy soul with trouble and desolation. Hope in Me, and thou wilt never be confounded.[1] Knowest thou not that I bless the righteous, and cover him with My love as with a shield?[2] Repose therefore in peace in Me. Oh, if thou knewest My Heart, and how it loves thee! if thou knewest how it watches unceasingly over thee, with what trust wouldst thou not give thyself unto My guidance! With what calm and sweet tranquillity wouldst thou not unceasingly say to Me, "My GOD, I place myself in Thy hands, in order that Thou mayest do with me whatsoever Thou wilt!"

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE: O JESUS, my loving Friend, my good Master! Thy words descend into my heart as a salutary balm, and shed there ineffable consolation! O my GOD! I am so sure that Thou watchest over all those who hope in Thee, and that they can fail of nothing while they wait upon Thee for all things, that I resolve to live henceforth without anxiety, and to unburden to Thee of all my disquietude.[3] Men may despoil me of earthly goods and of honours; sickness may deprive me of strength, and the means of serving Thee: I may even

[1] Eccles. ii. 10. [2] Ps. v. 13. [3] Ps. iv. 9.

lose Thy grace through sin (a misfortune from which I implore Thee to preserve me:) yet I will never lose my hope. I will preserve it to the last moment of my life, and the spirits of hell shall make vain efforts to snatch it from me. Others may think to find their happiness in their riches or talents: others may rest upon the innocency of their lives, the rigour of their repentance, the number of their good works, or the fervency of their prayers; but for me, O LORD, all my trust is in Thee only, and this trust never deceives any one. I am therefore in some degree assured that I shall be eternally happy, because I have the firm hope of being so; and from Thee, O GOD, it is that I hope it. I know, alas! too well, how frail and changeable I am; I know the power of temptation even against the most confirmed virtues; but all this is incapable of frightening me: so long as I hope in Thee, I am sheltered from all calamities. Now in the presence of heaven and earth I say, "I hope in Thee, O my GOD!" I know that I cannot have too much hope in Thee; I know that I shall one day possess all that I have hoped from Thee. I hope, therefore, O gracious JESUS, that Thou wilt forgive my sins, that Thou wilt love me for ever, and that I too shall love Thee without intermission, throughout time and throughout all eternity.

Nevertheless, one look cast upon S. Peter, had caused that unfaithful disciple to return to self-recollection. Pierced with acute grief, he forthwith quitted the company wherein he had denied his Master, and having gone out, he gave free vent to his tears, which flowed from a heart broken with compunction. His grief was unbounded, and S. Clement of Alexandria relates that his cheeks became hollow, by reason of the flood of tears, which he ceased

not to shed to the last moment of his life. He also relates that the remembrance of his crime caused him to rise every night to pray, at the first crowing of the cock, after which he slept no more throughout the night; and that he remained faithful to this practice till his death. . . . . Let us therefore imitate this great Apostle in his penitence, since we have been so unhappy as to imitate him in his fall.

O who will give me grace, with S. Peter, worthily to bewail for my sins, and not to cease until I receive remission for the same? How far short of his penitence is mine! Peter falls, and quickly arises; I fall every instant, and arise slowly and with lethargy. He weeps bitterly for his sin; taught by his own sad experience, he flies the occasion of his crime; he withdraws into solitude, and drowns in his tears the sin he has just committed. But I weep rarely for my innumerable iniquities; I watch ill over myself, and do not shun dangerous occasions. Do Thou, O LORD, remember me, and give me grace to be delivered from the overwhelming load of my sins, to know and dread my own weakness, and to have a real contrition of heart. Give me grace to compassionate the weaknesses of others, and to raise them up gently when they are fallen. Give me the gift of tears.

Thou, whom I have denied, not once only, but a hundred times, yea a thousand, have pity upon me. I desire to make amends, by tears and by penitence, for the wrongs which by my many sins I have done to Thee, of which I now repent with my whole heart. O my GOD, heal the wounds of my soul, by pouring therein the oil of Thy sacred consolation. Amen.

Practical Resolutions.

UPON DISTRUST OF ONESELF.

Distrust thyself, my dear Theotime, as thy bitterest enemy; and if thou standest, take heed lest thou fall.[1] Many, from having reckoned too much upon their own strength, and from not having carefully guarded themselves, have ended by grievously falling. Beware of drawing down upon thyself a like calamity; and to avoid it, beware of thyself. Avoid occasions of evil, and lean not too much upon thy acquired virtues. Forget not that he who exposes himself to danger without necessity, will end by finding his ruin.[2] Beware of becoming elated by reason of thy good works, for thou wouldst thereby run the risk of losing all. Alas! why should we be proud of a good thing which is not our own? "From GOD alone proceed all our virtues," says S. Bernard; "our vices and sins are our own." Our charity and chastity come from Him; pride, avarice, and cupidity, from ourselves. Without the grace of GOD we can do nothing; with grace we are full of strength and ardour for the practice of virtues. Of ourselves we fall whither sin drags us; but, without the grace of GOD, could we raise ourselves up again? If we be powerful, or rich, or wise, we are indebted for these to the grace of GOD, and solely to His grace. To GOD alone belong holiness, justice, and goodness; and how much soever of these men may have, they hold it from His pure liberality. Never then, dear Theotime, presume upon thy own strength: attribute

[1] 1 Cor. x. 12. [2] Ecclus. iii. 26.

nothing to thy own merits, and never place thy trust either in thy skill, or in thy courage, or in aught beside. In the midst of the temptations, dangers, and perils by which thou art assailed, place thy hope in the heart of JESUS, as in a secure asylum; for he who distrusts himself, and trusts only in GOD, is protected and sheltered by His mercy, and need fear no fall, because His hand sustains him. Repeat, then, frequently to our LORD, in the course of the day, these words: "My LORD, I cast myself at Thy feet, and commit to Thee my body, my soul, and my eternal salvation. Vouchsafe to support my weakness, and to communicate to me a portion of Thy strength, that I may never have the unhappiness to forsake Thy service."

CHAPTER XXII.

JESUS IS LED BEFORE PILATE.

"And Herod with his men of war set Him at nought, and mocked Him, and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him again to Pilate."—S. Luke xxiii. 11.

OUR good Master had passed the night in the midst of the servants of the High Priest. He had been the object of every possible insult and injury, and He had suffered all in silence without complaining, offering all to His FATHER, to obtain the forgiveness of our sins.

"The day being come, the Jews led JESUS before Pilate to condemn Him to death, but Pilate declared Him to be innocent,[1] and to free himself from the importunity of

[1] S. Luke xxiii. 4.

the Jews, who continued to demand the death of the Saviour, he sent Him to Herod. Herod was rejoiced to see Jesus Christ brought into his presence, hoping that the Lord, to deliver Himself from death, would perform before him some of those miracles of which he had heard the report: therefore he asked Him many questions. But because He would not deliver Himself from death, and because that wicked man was not worthy to be answered by Him, Jesus kept silence, and answered him not. Then that proud king with his men of war set Him at nought and mocked Him, and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe," (in mockery and in token that he considered Him a madman,) "and sent Him again to Pilate."[1]

S. Bonaventure comments thus upon these words: "He despised Him as one powerless, because He performed no miracle; as one ignorant, because He answered not a word; as cowardly, because He defended not Himself."

The voice of the Disciple: O my Saviour! wherefore didst Thou suffer that impious king to treat Thee with so much contempt? wherefore didst Thou not confound his pride, and command a legion of angels to punish him and his whole court as they deserved?

The voice of the Beloved: My son, My love for thee is that which restrained the strokes of My justice. When I beheld Myself clothed in a gorgeous robe, and exposed to the derision of the crowd, I thought of thee, and said within Myself, "That poor child will one day have to suffer contempt, insults, and ill treatment; his soul will then be in sorrow and agony. Therefore to leave him an excellent example of resignation, and to bestow upon him the grace to suffer all with calmness, I will en-

[1] S. Luke xxiii. 11.

dure the ignominies with which I am overwhelmed, and that without saying a word, or breathing a complaint."

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE: O good JESUS! the more I know Thee, the more I learn to love Thee! Since it was for love of me Thou didst endure so much ill treatment, give me grace to have more resignation and conformity to Thy Holy Will, when I find myself the mark of the contempt of others. Come to the aid of my helplessness; for alas, I am very weak when it is in question to suffer.

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED: Take courage, My child, and let not thyself be cast down by difficulties. I know what it costs human nature, to be regarded and treated as guilty, to-day of pride and vanity, to-morrow of sloth and gluttony, another day of ambition, while perhaps our conscience meanwhile accuses us of none of these things. I know all that it costs the pride of man to be thought sinful and ignorant: yea, I know it. Nevertheless, My son, I repeat to thee, be not cast down. Accustom thyself to despise the judgments of man, which are but wind and dust: seek to please Me, and to please only Me, and then courageously set at nought the opinions of others, which can neither render thee better nor worse in My eyes. When in the presence of Herod I was clothed in a gorgeous robe, and treated as a madman, I was not thereby less the immortal King of Glory, and the Creator of heaven and earth! I was not thereby less the object of the loving-kindnesses of My Heavenly FATHER! So likewise, My son, in vain shall men despise thee, and treat thee as contemptible, thou shalt not be therefore less worthy in My sight of all My love, if thou have taken care to maintain thy soul pure and free from every deadly defilement.

Happy is he who loves Me, and by his resignation in the midst of contempt walks in the steps of that once despised SAVIOUR.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE: How is it Thou hast so much love for men, from whom Thou hast received only ingratitude and contempt? Alas! I am one of those who have aggrieved Thee more than did Herod! O my JESUS, punish me not like Herod, in depriving me of Thy voice. Herod knew Thee not as Thou art: I acknowledge Thee to be my GOD: Herod loved Thee not: I try to love Thee above myself. O refuse not to me the voice of Thy inspirations, though my offences deserve that Thou shouldst. Say what Thou wilt have me do; for with Thy grace I am ready to do all. O my GOD, have pity on my misery, and cast upon me a look of mercy. Amen.

Practical Resolutions.

LOVE OF HUMILIATION AND OF CONTEMPT.

Resolve this day, my dear Theotime, to imitate thy LORD, Who was humbled and contemptuously treated at the court of Herod. Take it not amiss if thou be laden with contempt. It may be that thou shalt be despised, now for thy poverty, now for some outward defect, now for thy deficiency of learning, now even for thy worth's sake; but be not troubled. Say to our LORD from the depth of thy heart, "My LORD, accept graciously the homage of that contempt of which I am at this time the object." Fall not into the error of those who, when they are despised, say, "If he knew who I am he would not act so." Do better: keep silence. True, it is hurtful to our pride to be wronged and ill-treated without opposing

or replying aught thereto; but goodness precisely consists in thus doing violence to ourselves. Be not grieved that others should discover in thee more of imperfection and less of holiness than they at first had thought, but rather avail thyself of such a favourable opportunity for making an important step in the virtue of humility. Have thou often on thy lips, and still oftener in thy heart, that prayer of John of the Cross; "LORD, give me grace to suffer and to be despised for love of Thee."

Humiliations, wrongs, contempt, are things which every man dreads, and avoids as much as possible. To be humbled, wronged, despised, is for the worldly man the height of misfortune. My dear Theotime, believe me, nothing is so sweet as an act of humiliation and a slight. Ask of all those souls who really love JESUS CHRIST if this be so, and they will reply that I deceive thee not herein. I pretend not to say that a soul which loves JESUS CHRIST is insensible to ill treatment, doubtless not: but the natural pain it feels in finding itself despised becomes changed into a calm pleasure, which none can know but by experience. Repeat then often and fearlessly, "LORD, I will suffer and be despised for Thee!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

OF THE SCOURGING OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

"Then Pilate took JESUS and scourged Him."—S. John xix. 1.

PILATE, to avoid the responsibility of condemning the Innocent One, in compliance with the demand of the Jews,

had sent Him before Herod, and had afterwards presented Him to the people together with Barabbas; but seeing that these two measures had not succeeded, he proposed to chastise Him, and then to set Him at liberty. With this intention he called the Jews and said to them, "Ye have brought this Man unto me, as one that perverteth the people, and behold, I, having examined Him before you, have found no fault in this Man touching those things whereof ye accuse Him: no, nor yet Herod, for I sent you to him. . . . . I will therefore chastise Him and release Him."[1] What an injustice! He declares Him to be entirely innocent, and yet offers to chastise Him! O gracious LORD JESUS! Thou art innocent, and behold, for love of me Thou submittest to the punishment of slaves! How hast Thou been able to love to such a degree a being so vile and contemptible as I am?

Nevertheless Pilate delivered JESUS to the soldiers, and commanded them to scourge Him. Picture to thyself, O my soul! how the executioners, in order to fulfil this unjust command, threw themselves with fury upon this Lamb full of gentleness: how with cries of joy they led Him to the judgment hall, and bound Him to a column. But what then did the holy JESUS? Ever humble and submissive, He accepted for our sins this grievous and humiliating torment. Behold the executioners with the scourge in their hand, the signal given they raise their arms, and all at once begin to strike that sacred person! Stay, O barbarians! ye err! Upon whom do your blows descend? He whom ye strike is not guilty: I only am so!

That pure flesh appeared at first livid: then began the

[1] S. Luke xxiii. 14.

blood to flow therefrom! The executioners have already mangled Him, and yet continue to strike without pity upon His wounds, thus heaping pain upon pain.[1] O my soul, wilt thou also be one of those hardhearted wretches who with an eye of indifference behold thy GOD scourged? Consider the grief of thy Redeemer, and still more the love with which He endures for thee this shameful torment. O, assuredly JESUS, while beneath the scourge, thought upon thee. If for love of thee He had endured but a single stroke, yet shouldst thou be kindled with love to Him, saying, "GOD consents to be struck for my sake!" but it was not merely one stroke which He received, He willed that for thy sins His flesh should be torn, as the prophet Isaiah had predicted: "He had no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we shall desire Him. He is despised and rejected of men: a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not."[2] Thus was JESUS ill-treated: thus humiliated: and wherefore? Because He willed to suffer the afflictions we had merited. Blessed for ever be Thy mercy, O gracious JESUS, Who hast willed to be thus tormented to set me free from eternal torments! O GOD of love! unhappy is the callous heart which loves Thee not!

What does our gracious SAVIOUR whilst His tormentors treat Him thus cruelly? He says not a word, utters not a cry, not even a sigh, but filled with patience offers up all to GOD, to disarm His justice and propitiate Him towards us. "As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so openeth He not His mouth."[3] They who shear a sheep

[1] Psalm lxix. 27. [2] Isa. liii. 5. [3] Acts viii. 32.

confine themselves to taking off superfluous wool: but from Thee, O LORD! the barbarians tear away Thy flesh, and Thy body is one whole wound. This is the baptism of blood for which Thou didst thirst, and whereof Thou saidst, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?" Go then, O my soul, and be washed in that precious blood with which this blest earth is bathed. Could I, O my gracious SAVIOUR, yet doubt of Thy love, when I behold Thee all covered with wounds and blood? No, doubtless, for each of Thy wounds is a most sure pledge of the love Thou bearest to me. From each of Thy wounds proceeds a voice, demanding from me love for love. A single drop of Thy blood would suffice to save me; but Thou wilt give it all without reserve, in order that I may give myself wholly, unreservedly to Thee. It is then done! I give myself entirely to Thee: accept me, and help me to be faithful to Thee.

O JESUS covered with wounds! behold then the state to which my iniquities have reduced Thee! "O good JESUS," cries S. Bernard, "we have sinned, and Thou art punished." Let the immensity of Thy love be for ever blessed, and Thyself be loved as Thou deservest by all sinners, and by me especially, who above all others have despised Thee.

"Let us love the Bridegroom," affectionately said S. Augustine, "for the more disfigured He appears to us, the more is He worthy of the affection and tenderness of the Bride." Yes, gracious SAVIOUR, I see Thee covered with wounds: I contemplate the loveliness of Thy countenance: but alas! it is pale and disfigured with blood. But the more Thou art disfigured, O my LORD, the more

beautiful and gracious dost Thou appear to me! And in fact, what are those disfigurements but marks of Thy tender love towards me?

I love Thee, O JESUS, covered with wounds and mangled for me! I would suffer thus for Thee, like so many happy martyrs. But if I cannot now offer Thee wounds and blood, at least I offer Thee all the crosses which shall befall me. I offer Thee my heart, and will love Thee as tenderly as I can. And what should my soul henceforth love with so much devotion as One Who has shed His blood and endured scourging for me? Amen.

Practical Resolutions.

OF PATIENCE UNDER SUFFERINGS, AND ESPECIALLY IN SICKNESS.

The most precious, the sole occupation of saints on earth, is the seeking with their whole heart to suffer all weariness, contempt, and pain, to please GOD our LORD. Imitate them, my dear Theotime. Seek this day, and every day thou livest, the opportunity of doing something pleasing to so good a LORD, even if it should cost thee some fatigue and trouble, or slight humiliation. Endure patiently the thousand trifling pains which must necessarily be the portion of the very healthiest. Offer all to our LORD Who was scourged, and complain not of anything. Should it please our LORD to send thee some serious sickness, receive it from His hand with resignation, and be submissive to His will in all things, I would say further, give thanks to our kind LORD for the sick-

ness, which He sends thee, as for a very great favour. Yes, my dear Theotime, I would say to thee with a pious author, Thou shouldst render Him thanks, inasmuch as this sickness affords thee great matter for consolation, by reason of the many blessings which accompany it.

It is *beneficial:* 1st, for those who tend thee: they lay up much for themselves by reason of their charity. "O how it comforts me," said S. Francis de Sales in his sickness, "to see the trouble which those poor people are taking about me! they are on the road to heaven through their services and their charity."

2ndly: *Beneficial* for the purging away of thy sins. It is a much easier and shorter way to destroy our sins by penitence upon a bed, than to be punished for them in the fire. We must repent, or we must suffer.

3rdly: *Beneficial* for thy predestination. There are few more efficacious means to purify and save a soul than a long sickness. Many great saints have passed their whole life in habitual infirmities. They could neither attend hours of prayer, nor many other religious duties: they were submissive to GOD: they suffered for love of Him: it was all GOD demanded for their sanctification. O Theotime, how many now in hell would be in heaven, had they here been long sick and afflicted! Kiss then lovingly the hand of JESUS when it strikes thee: His strokes are pledges of His tenderness. When thou art sick, be careful, for the love of our LORD, not to give way to impatience, grief, and sadness: rather endeavour to retain great peace and profound tranquillity in thy soul, and say frequently, "My GOD, Thy will be done! my GOD, I love Thee, and desire to suffer for love of Thee, LORD JESUS, give me of Thy patience!" Take cheerfully

all prescribed remedies, and overcome the repugnance their bitterness may cause thee by meditating upon JESUS CHRIST given to drink gall and vinegar, and by desiring to share His cup. Then await calmly by GOD's benediction the success of these remedies, and be not disquieted should they not effect thy cure as promptly as thou desirest. He Who has sent thee the disease loves thee too well to withhold thy restoration to health if it be necessary to His glory,—to thy salvation. Leave Him therefore to deal with thee. To give up ourselves into the hands of GOD during the time of sickness, is to make a very praiseworthy act of love to GOD. Besides which it is the only means to maintain ourselves in peace.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE CROWN OF THORNS.

"And when they had platted a crown of thorns they put it on His head."—S. Matth. xxvii. 29.

THE chastisement of the scourging was immediately followed by another, either suggested by the hatred of the Jews, or invented by the brutality of the soldiers. The soldiers of the governor led JESUS into the judgment hall, and there the whole gang having assembled around Him, they stripped Him, and put on Him a scarlet robe, to imitate the royal purple. They likewise put a reed in His right hand, in lieu of a sceptre, and upon His head thorns platted to represent a crown; and as though these

thorns entered not far enough into that Sacred Head, already mangled by the scourge, they took the reed which He held, "and they spit upon Him, and smote Him on the head."

And wherefore did those cruel thorns thus agonise their Creator? But wherefore do I say the thorns? It was the wickedness of man which pierced the head of my Redeemer. Yes, it is I, O gracious JESUS, who, by guilty thoughts and desires, formed Thy crown of thorns: but now I hate them; I abhor them more than any other evil, more than death itself. O thorns, consecrated by the Blood of the SON of GOD, towards which I turn with contrition and humility, pierce my soul, and cause it to be penetrated for ever with grief, at having offended so good a GOD! My gracious Redeemer, since Thou hast thus suffered for me, detach me from creatures, and from myself, in order that I may truly say I belong to myself no longer, but to Thee alone, and wholly.

Sovereign of the world! to what state do I see Thee reduced! Hast Thou, then, consented to be the sport of the whole town of Jerusalem? Alas! the blood flows in abundance from Thy forehead down Thy face upon Thy breast; and, nevertheless, the soldiers content themselves not with having mangled Thee from Thy head to Thy feet, they load Thee with fresh torments and new outrages. O ye heavens! whither may the cruelty of man extend? But that which of all is most worthy of my veneration, is Thy love, the meekness and patience with which Thou acceptest and sufferest so much reproach for the salvation of man. O JESUS! give me a heart capable of loving Thee as Thou deservest.

But after the soldiers had thus persecuted our gracious

SAVIOUR, they clothed Him in mockery as a king; "and they bowed the knee before Him, and mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!"[1] Then arising, as says S. John, they insulted Him yet more, and "smote Him with their hands."[2] That sacred Head, thus pierced with thorns, felt at every moment mortal pain; so that each stroke, each blow renewed all His agony. O my soul! contemplate thy GOD in that state; acknowledge in Him the Sovereign LORD of all things, as He indeed is: render thanks to Him, as unto a King of grief and love; and love Him, inasmuch as He suffers but to obtain thy heart and win thy love.

O Christian, whoever thou art who readest this work, I ask thee if it be possible to refuse to love a GOD Who loves us so much, as to suffer such unworthy treatment? Is it possible we should still consent to offend Him? Alas! the most cruel thorns which can pierce His sacred Head are our sins; and it is a truth, that each time a Christian consents to a deadly sin, he renews in some sort all the sufferings and shame of the scourging and the coronation with thorns of our LORD. Let us therefore shun, not only deadly sin, but likewise every lesser sin, because it offends our good Master. I say, let us shun the very shadow of sin, and let us strive to belong wholly to JESUS CHRIST. S. Bernard says, "He who refuses to live for Thee, O LORD JESUS, is unworthy to live, and is even already dead: he whose sentiments are not conformed to Thine, is a fool: he who lives not wholly for Thee in this world, deserves not to live in it. O GOD, Thou hast created for Thyself all that exists: and he who will live in this world only for himself, and not for Thee, begins to

[1] S. Matth. xxvii. 29. [2] S. John xix. 3.

cease to be anything, and to hold any rank among other beings." Let us, then, love JESUS, as far as creatures can possibly love Him: let us love Him to our last breath, and throughout eternity.

"The Wounds of my SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST," exclaims S. Augustine, are full of mercy, goodness, meekness, and love! They were opened by the Jews with rage incredible, but they are become for me a refuge. By means of these it is permitted me to taste how gracious the LORD is: by these I may taste all the sweetness of GOD'S mercy, which He useth towards those who call upon Him, who seek Him in the sincerity of their hearts, —especially towards those who love Him. Alas! what would become of me, if I found not in Thee, O LORD, an abundant redemption, a source of sweetness amid the tribulations of this exile, a peaceful assurance of the grace of my JESUS, and a continual encouragement to advance in the way of perfection, and of the love of GOD. What would become of me! Be Thou blessed, O good JESUS, for that tender love which led Thee to receive so many wounds, and to permit me to shelter myself therein, to escape the furious pursuit of the enemies of my salvation. Amen.

Practical Resolutions.

TO AVOID LITTLE SINS.

You have just seen that the most cruel thorn which can pierce the head of our blessed SAVIOUR, is sin. If, therefore, thou lovest this tender Friend of our souls, carefully avoid, I say, not only deadly sin; for alas! that is so

frightful a monster, that the mere thought thereof should inspire thee with horror: but likewise avoid little sins, however slight they may appear to be. Watch attentively over thyself, in order never to commit one deliberately, for this is possible by GOD'S grace.

1. *Govern thy tongue.* Therefore avoid slight sins of the tongue, as those petty slanders so usual in the intercourse of life. No more of those inconsiderate speeches, those words of vanity. Away even with idle words; for of these thou must one day render an account.

2. *Govern thine eyes.* Therefore no more unnecessary gazing upon the objects around us; above all, if they may become snares to thee.

3. *Govern thy mind.* Therefore judge no one, unless duty oblige thee to it. Be not easily suspicious of evil, cherish not a secret self-complacency, nor boast of what thou doest.

4. *Govern thy heart.* Therefore have not inordinate or too earthly attachments for creatures, whoever they may be, and have no paltry jealousies; and, in a word, watch without ceasing, watch over all. Permit not thyself in any light distractions, or slight fretfulnesses, or loss of time; nor in any immoderate laughter, nor useless visits, nor desire of show, nor even in any slight excess in eating and drinking, nor yet in sleep, nor in play; and above all, say not in thine heart, "these are only little faults; I care not whether or not I correct myself of them." Alas! this would be to cause grief to the heart of our good LORD, and ill to acknowledge all His love for thee. Make this resolution from to-day, my dear Theotime: commit no more any sin that is wholly voluntary. Pray to our LORD to help thee, and He will assuredly do it.

CHAPTER XXV.

IT IS FOR LOVE OF US, AND BY REASON OF OUR SINS, THAT JESUS CHRIST WAS COVERED WITH WOUNDS.

"He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities."—Isaiah liii. 5.

THE least suffering endured by our SAVIOUR was assuredly more than sufficient to satisfy the justice of GOD, and efface the sins of the world; but the love which JESUS in His goodness bore to us, could not be contented with so little. In order to expiate our crimes, and at the same time to prove to us the greatness of His tenderness towards us, our Redeemer willed to be, according to the expression of Isaiah, "vulneratus et attritus;" that is to say, covered with wounds from head to foot, in such sort that His adorable Body offered no longer any whole part.[1] Isaiah likewise compared Him to a leper: "We did esteem Him stricken, smitten of GOD, and afflicted."[2]

When, with the eyes of faith, we consider the SAVIOUR of the world all covered with wounds—when we perceive His body horribly mangled and mutilated, it is easy then to comprehend how great is the love of this Divine SAVIOUR for us. "O man," exclaims S. Augustine, "learn to appreciate thyself; learn how much of gratitude thou owest to GOD; learn what is thy dignity, by that which it has cost Him to redeem thee; learn, in conclusion, how shameful it would be to thee to outrage Him still by thy sins, and learn to curb thy passions, and put an end to thy disorders."

[1] Isaiah i. 6. [2] Isaiah liii. 4.

JESUS *was wounded to expiate my sins.* JESUS, the innocent JESUS, had only the appearance of sin: nevertheless the Justice of His Divine FATHER weighed upon Him, and He was mangled with strokes, crowned with thorns, and fastened to a shameful gibbet. "For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"[1] What will become of me, a poor sinner? I, whose numberless iniquities increase every day over my head; I, who till now have lived but to offend my GOD? O merciful JESUS, have compassion upon me!

My kind Master gave me an excellent lesson. He taught me, by submitting Himself to so many frightful torments, that sin could not rest unpunished; it must be punished, either by the sinner, or by GOD Himself. If I weep for the sins I have committed; if I become a penitent for them; if I exercise against myself a holy indignation, I give them the punishment they deserve; but if I will not punish them thus myself, GOD my Judge will punish them. But woe to me! For "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living GOD."[2] To avoid the unhappiness of being presented before this awful Judge with a soul stained with guilt, I ought from to-day to strive to efface them by a serious repentance, and to walk in the footsteps of my SAVIOUR. But O shame! the life of JESUS CHRIST has been one continual suffering, and mine is spent in ease, and in the softness of repose. Have I then been ignorant hitherto of the necessity under which I lie of punishment, either in this world, or else in the other amid the flames of hell? Was I ignorant that a sinner can only go to heaven through tribulation and sufferings?[3] What! JESUS wept for my sins

[1] S. Luke xxiii. 31. [2] Heb. x. 31. [3] Acts xiv. 22.

and I have not wept for them myself! O it shall not be thus! I will mourn over all the sins I have committed from my earliest infancy; I will chastise my body; I will mortify it unsparingly, and will encourage myself in my penitence by meditation on the penitence of JESUS, and of all the saints. I will imitate David, who, although assured of the pardon of his sins, mourned them without ceasing. Like him, the remembrance of having lost the grace of my GOD will make me shed day and night torrents of tears; like him, I shall have ever present to my mind the sins of my past life;[1] like him, I will say, "LORD, remember not the sins of my youth."[2]

O my GOD, what a difference is there between my conduct and that of Thy saints! Peter sinned but once, and wept for it ever afterwards; I sin frequently, and never weep. One holy solitary said, "In whatever place I may be, I behold only my sins, and look upon myself as the prey of hell, in which I see a multitude of souls less guilty than I am; then I fall on my face on the ground, and moan and weep before my Judge. . . . ." And I reflect little upon that hell which I have deserved, and do scarcely anything whereby to avoid it. All the saints have striven to expiate their sins by all the rigours of penitence; some "had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings; yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment; they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; . . . they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth;"[3] but I do nothing, suffer nothing of all that. Miserable that I am, what is then the goal I have in view? Is it likewise towards that bright heaven, which cost them thus much to reach, that

[1] Ps. li. 3. [2] Ps. xxv. 6. [3] Heb. xi. 36—38.

I am directing my course? Even so. . . . Then like them I must take the right road; it is a narrow one, so my heavenly Master has warned me,—"Narrow is the way which leadeth unto life." I must, like them, weep over my past iniquities. I must implore the forgiveness of them, not for a few weeks or months only, but during my whole life. Alas! how know I if my GOD has forgiven me? How know I if my Heavenly FATHER has restored to me the robe of my innocence? I hope it from His mercy, but I have not a full assurance of it. It behoves me, then, to be ever penitent, ever a mourner; and were even an angel from heaven to come and announce to me from GOD that my sins are remitted, still ought I to continue to weep at sight of the wounds with which they pierced my Divine SAVIOUR.

But these wounds of JESUS will not only lead me to penitence and compunction for my sins; they will also excite me to confidence and love. In His wounds will I go and shelter myself, and find therein a sweet repose. I shall there be the more preserved from every danger, inasmuch as JESUS is mighty to save me. Does the world frown around me? Does the flesh engage me in deadly strife? Does Satan encompass me with his snares? I shall not fall, for I lean upon JESUS CHRIST. Have I been unhappy enough to commit some great sin? and is my conscience thereby troubled? I will not abandon myself to despair, for I will think upon the wounds of my LORD. What evil is there so incurable that it shall not be healed by the death of the SON of GOD? In the midst of all my spiritual miseries, I will turn mine eyes to the wounds of JESUS, and the sight of so powerful a remedy will restore to me calm and confidence.

O my soul, which art so weak, so poor, so languishing, so destitute of all things, go cast thyself into the arms of thy good Master; for He is all to thee, and in Him thou possessest all things. If thou wilt be healed of the deep wounds which sin has occasioned thee, He is thy Physician; if thou art overwhelmed with the burden of thy sins, He is Justice and Holiness; if thou needest help against thine enemies, He is Strength and Power; if thou dreadest death, He is Life; if thou desirest to go to heaven, He is the Way; if thou fleest from darkness, He is Light; if thou seekest nourishment, He is Himself that Food which only can preserve thy life. Yes, my soul, thou wilt find all in JESUS CHRIST; He will be thy support and thy strength; and if thou hast the faithfulness to hide thyself in His wounds when the infernal devourer comes to attack thee, He will most assuredly protect thee against him, and thou wilt come forth victorious from the strife.

O my beloved LORD! wherefore art Thou covered thus with livid and bloody wounds? Who reduced Thee to so pitiable a condition? . . . Alas! it was my sins which mangled Thy adorable Body; they forced that crown of thorns upon Thy head. O good JESUS, to what an extent did Thy love for me carry Thee! It is I who deserved the penalty of my sins, and Thou dost undergo it! Give to me, then, grace to suffer something in this life, in acknowledgment of so great tenderness: give me the grace to mortify, despise, and humble myself on all occasions, and to neglect nothing to prove to Thee that I am not ungrateful. I cannot live without sufferings, since Thou hast suffered so much for love of me. Strike, O LORD, here, but spare me in eternity. Amen.

Practical Resolutions.

ON LOVE OF SOLITUDE.

Acquire this day, my dear Theotime, and retain all through thy life the habit of retreating in spirit into the wounds of our LORD, especially into His sacred Heart. Make there a retirement whither thou mayest withdraw in the hour of temptation. In order to that, begin by escaping from the tumult of the world, as far as thy duties will permit. Love to dwell in solitude and silence. O my GOD! how many souls are there who make no progress in the love of JESUS, because they know not the peace of retirement. Such souls say, they would fain live in self-recollection, and in union with our LORD, but they do precisely those things which alienate them from that end: they seek much company, worldly amusements, affections too earthly, and shun solitude. One should say, they were afraid to find themselves alone with GOD. My dear Theotime, imitate not their example; if thou wilt find GOD, seek Him in solitude. "I am never less alone," says S. Bernard, "than when I am alone." How true is this! In solitude we find GOD, we think of our duties, our sins, and these we weep for and loathe; in solitude we realize the shortness of time, the length of eternity, the vanity of earthly things, of pleasures, honours, riches: in solitude we speak to GOD, and He speaks to us, we converse heart to heart with Him, we magnify His greatness, we bless His mercies, we taste the sweetness of His love: in solitude we think of heaven, we sever ourselves from all created things. O blessed solitude! happy is he who knows and loves thee! Chiefly

is he happy, who has found the secret of being always alone with GOD, even in the midst of the greatest company! Pray to the LORD, my dear Theotime, to give thee that solitude of the heart in which, even while in the midst of the tumult of men and business, thou canst be ever self-recollected, united to GOD, attentive to His presence: pray Him to give it thee, but forget not that to obtain it, thou must as much as possible live retired and in external solitude, without thereby failing in what the duties of thy state demand. It is impossible to have pleasure in unnecessarily coming forth into public, where the good of our neighbour calls not for it, and yet at the same time to be recollected and united to GOD.

CHAPTER XXVI.

JESUS BEING CONDEMNED TO DEATH, BEARS HIS CROSS TO CALVARY.

"And He, bearing His Cross, came to a place which is called Golgotha (or Calvary.")—S. John xix. 17.

AFTER our LORD had been scourged, Pilate seeing Him reduced to a condition so worthy of compassion, imagined that to appease His enemies, he had only to present Him before them. He therefore led Him forward on a kind of balcony, and showing Him to the Jews, said, "Behold the Man!"[1] The people kept silence, and perhaps compassion had begun to move them, but the chief

[1] S. John xix. 4, 5.

priests and their ministers cried out on beholding Him, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!"[1] Pilate, disappointed in his hope, said to them peevishly, "Take ye Him, and crucify Him, for I find no fault in Him. The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the SON of GOD."[2] And moreover, "If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend."[3] These last words frightened Pilate: he had the unworthy weakness to yield, "and he delivered Him to be crucified."[4]

O injustice! Wherefore, O Divine SAVIOUR, wast Thou judged worthy of so shameful and cruel a death? what could occasion such a condemnation? My sins they were, Blessed JESUS, which made Thee thus to suffer; my own guilt caused Thee to die, I am the instrument of Thy sorrows and most cruel punishment! O marvel inconceivable! The Just One suffers that death which the sinner has deserved! GOD the SON dies, to restore life to His creature a vile slave! What can I render Thee, O JESUS! for so great a love? Is there anything in the heart of man, which deserves to be offered to Thee for so great tenderness? Woe is me! I find nothing in mine, save a poor desire to love Thee. Accept graciously this desire, O my GOD; and vouchsafe to satisfy it! Cause me to find no charm nor sweetness, but in Thee! Let nothing without Thee appear beautiful or pleasant to me, but rather let all seem contemptible and vile; let the object of Thy hatred be mine; and let nothing please me which pleaseth not Thee: grant that far from realizing joy in what is not of Thee, I may only find weariness

[1] S. John xix. 6.
[2] S. John xix. 6, 7.
[3] S. John xix. 12.
[4] S. Matth. xxvii. 26.

therein: let my delight be even to suffer for Thy love; let the glory of Thy Name alone support and animate me; Thy remembrance be my only consolation; may I be nourished with bread moistened with my tears! and may my whole joy be to meditate on Thy law so holy and just. Finally enable me to love Thee ever more and more. O JESUS! I am most unworthy of Thy love, I know, but Thou art worthy of mine. I beseech Thee, render me henceforth as worthy, as I have been hitherto unworthy. O JESUS, give me grace to love Thee.

As soon as the Jews by their acclamations and threats had forced from the lips of their cowardly governor the sentence of death, they forthwith thought only of the speedy execution of the same, to leave Pilate no time to reflect thereupon, and to revoke it. The Cross had been prepared in anticipation: they cause it to be immediately brought to the Judgment Hall, that our LORD might have the pain and humiliation of bearing it on His Shoulders to the place of execution. But that He might not be taken for another, and that He might be known to every one, they take off from Him the old purple robe with which they had clothed Him, and put on Him again His own garment. Then took JESUS His Cross, and laying it upon His Shoulders, bruised with blows, He advanced towards Calvary, preceded by two thieves who were to be crucified with Him.

But our good SAVIOUR, already weighed down by the sufferings of the preceding night, had need to collect His little remaining strength, to be able to bear the heavy burden with which He was laden. His sweat covered Him; His breath failed Him; His wounds were re-opened by the exertions He was constrained to make, in

order to walk and sustain His Cross. At length on passing out of the town, being unable to bear up longer, He fell beneath the load with His face on the ground. . . . The soldiers who conducted Him then overwhelmed Him with blows, venting upon Him words of abuse to force Him to rise; but the Jews seeing that He had not strength so to do, and fearing lest He should die before He had undergone the death of crucifixion, constrained a man of Cyrene, Simon by name, going out of the city, to carry His Cross and follow Him. We may believe that Simon did so most unwillingly, and only from being compelled. But when by the light of that faith afterwards revealed to him, he discovered that it had been vouchsafed to him to alleviate the suffering of his SAVIOUR, thereby putting his hand to the instrument of man's salvation, and to be the type of those who should bear their Cross and follow JESUS CHRIST, viz. the elect of all ages, surely his lot must have appeared to him an enviable one, as it has ever appeared to such pious souls, as would gladly have been associated with him in so glorious a ministration.

O happy the man who bears the cross which Heaven sends to him. That man is truly the disciple of JESUS CHRIST! But what do I say? We can only be so upon that condition. Yea, each of us must bear his cross, how heavy soever it be: I must myself bear mine, and walk in the steps of my Master. O JESUS! vouchsafe to teach me how to bear it for love of Thee, with joy, or at least with calmness and resignation.

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED: My son, thou must first know, that one who seeks to deserve the lovely name of Christian, must expect to lead here below a life of privations and sacrifices. It is needful that he bear his cross

each day, and that he learn by his own experience that there is no other way leading to life and to the true peace of the heart than the way of the Cross and of continual mortification. Thus, My child, thy way is always ready: it awaits thee everywhere: thou canst not elude it, whithersoever thou mayest go.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE: LORD! methinks I am ready to bear all the crosses it shall please Thee to send me: I refuse none; rather I thank Thee beforehand for all those which shall come to me from Thy hand.

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED: These inclinations of thy soul are excellent; these sentiments are generous: but O, My son, be ever on thy guard against thy own weakness. This day thou hast only to bear a light and ordinary cross, and all seems possible unto thee: how many are there, alas! who like thee praised Me while receiving My consolation: how many who blessed My Name, and vowed to Me a thousand times to be faithful in serving Me, and who notwithstanding have forsaken Me, or at most have only followed Me afar off, have murmured against My dealings with them, and have fallen into deep despondency because I have deemed it right to send them some adversity, some humiliation, or contempt, or sickness! What they have done thou thyself art liable to do: fear then thine own weakness, and never reckon but on My help.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE: Be Thou blessed, O my GOD, for the condescension wherewith Thou willest to remind me of my weakness which I am so disposed to forget: but teach me, I beseech Thee, what I must do to bear my cross well.

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED: All crosses and afflic-

tions come from heaven; they are a gift from My hand: a token of predestination. Yes, My son, the more afflictions I send to a soul, the more do I give her tokens of My tenderness. My greatest saints are precisely those who suffered most on earth. Endeavour to be convinced of this truth, and then thou wilt possess the secret how to suffer well. "I suffer, and GOD wills it so; may His holy Name be blest!" Herein is perfection. . . . O My son, if thou understoodest the value of afflictions, thou wouldst say to Me unceasingly, "LORD, either let me suffer or die!" thou wouldst repeat night and day with S. John of the Cross: "O my GOD, may I suffer and be despised for love of Thee!" With S. Augustine thou wouldst exclaim, "O what a Cross to have no Cross!" "Nulla Crux quanta Crux!"

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE: Teach me yet further, O my kind Master, what I must do in times of temptation. Frequently evil spirits violently shake my soul and terribly assault it; and then I think myself at each moment on the verge of a grievous downfall. I am sometimes assailed by such frightful thoughts that it would seem they could only enter into the heart of a reprobate. I make a thousand efforts to cast them out, but in spite of all they remain adhering to my soul. How must I act in such moments of inward strife?

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED: Thou must strive to remain calm and unshaken, and bear this cross without disquietude or murmuring. Let not thyself be cast down by any temptation, however fearful, however violent; and give up thyself to Me with confidence. Reflect that all these sorrows in the designs of My mercy, are trials to make thy love for Me shine out brightly, lessons to teach

thee to compassionate those who like thyself shall be assailed by the darts of the tempter: means of expiating thy sins, and of preventing fresh sins; preparations for more abundant gifts of grace; lastly, preservatives against pride, which make thee feel that without My grace thou canst do nothing. It is then by an effect of My love for thee that I suffer thee to be tempted; it is in mercy that I appear for a time to absent Myself from thee, though I am never more present with thee than then. Fear nothing, I am with thee: strive with courage against all the suggestions of the devil, and be never disconcerted. He makes great noise, but he cannot harm him who puts his trust in Me. The more he torments and buffets thee, the more opportunities he thus gives thee to increase thy righteousness and thy glory in heaven. Therefore be firm, and commend thyself incessantly to Me. I have overturned him by My power, thou too shalt overturn him by the help of My grace, which I will never refuse thee.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE: My GOD, there is yet a cross which I bear with great difficulty, and which appears to me a very heavy one.

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED: And what is this cross, My son?

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE: When I remember the sweetness and the spiritual consolation I formerly tasted, and compare them with my present dryness of spirit, I am deeply grieved, for it seems to me that instead of advancing in Thy love, I am backsliding. Formerly everything seemed sweet in Thy service, to-day all appears often very painful. O my LORD! have I not cause to think, that wearied with my ingratitude and coldness, Thou hast left and forsaken me?

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED: My son, think it not

for this would be to wrong My love. Dost thou not recognise herein My accustomed dealings with a soul I love? At the commencement, when this soul just begins to give Itself to Me by a sincere conversion, I visit it, I strengthen it, I enlighten it, I win its affection by letting it only feel delight in My service: I draw it by the sweetness of My allurements; I show Myself to it continually to retain it by the charm of My presence; in a word, I give it only to taste of sweetness, in order to spare its weakness. But afterwards I take away the milk, and give it the solid food of affliction. I speak the word: and lo! heaven, earth, and hell, are in league against it; enemies from without, temptations within; and in the depth of the soul dryness and desolation. Sometimes I leave it in the shadow and terror of death; sometimes I recall it to light and life. Now, I deal thus with it, to try, purify, humble, and instruct it, to render it flexible to My will, to reproach it with its minor failings, its lesser deficiences in self-mortification, &c. Thou seest, then, My son, how far I am from forsaking thee, when I treat thee thus.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE: And my continual distractions of thought! wilt Thou not speak with me of these? O my GOD! what a painful Cross is it to seek to restrain my mind when it wanders, and to be unable to succeed in doing so; like a vagrant it is ever rambling, and I have scarcely the power to recall it, and fix it for a few instants at Thy feet.

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED: My son, I will not that these wanderings of thought should occasion thee a scrupulous uneasiness, which might cast thee into trouble and discouragement. If thy spirit strays away in spite of thyself, be not alarmed: seek to recall it by a gentle effort, and do without disquietude or embarrass-

ment, whatever depends upon thyself, leaving the rest to My will. Love Me with thy whole heart, and the sins thou hast not yet learned to overcome, will become to thee a source of humiliation, a motive of virtue, a spring of consolation. A promising soil derives even from dung an additional fertility, and a man full of good desires, even while in the depth of wretchedness, reaps in due time good fruit from his very imperfections and misery. Prayest thou with reverence, and with a real desire to be devout? No more is needful. I am satisfied with thee, notwithstanding the distractions which prevent thee from being so attentive as thou desirest. I will not impute to thee as a crime, those wanderings of a frail and unsteady nature, provided thou indulge them not voluntarily when they occur, and didst not previously give occasion to them through neglect of guarding thy senses. After all cast thy miseries with trustfulness into the abyss of My mercies; there they shall vanish as a spark disappears when fallen into the midst of the sea.

The voice of the Disciple: Lord Jesus, I thank Thee for the instruction which in Thy tenderness Thou vouchsafest to give me; may I put it into practice. That which I now ask of Thee, is that I may resignedly and uncomplainingly bear all the Crosses Thou wilt send me, that I may fulfil Thy holy Will, always, in every place and circumstance. Amen.

Practical Resolutions.

WE MUST BEAR OUR CROSS EVERY DAY.

Our Lord Jesus Christ says: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his

cross daily, and follow Me."[1] My dear Theotime, give attention to these words of our Divine Master: "let him take up his Cross." They sound hard words, and nature shrinks therefrom: nevertheless, O Theotime, whatever it shall cost, thou must bear thy Cross with patience, as JESUS bore His own; for to the Cross are affixed our Salvation, our Strength against temptations, and the true love of GOD. Yes, thou must bear it, not grudgingly as sinners are forced to bear it, whereby they obtain no reward therefrom; but thou must bear it with submission and for the love of our LORD. Those there are who while they are receiving spiritual consolations, offer themselves to suffer all that martyrs have endured, the rack, iron nails, burning blades; but afterwards, though they have made these imaginary noble and generous offerings of themselves, they cannot endure uncomplainingly a head-ache, a slight uneasiness, the coldness of a friend, or a rather harsh word. My dear Theotime, GOD desires thee not to suffer the agonies of a bloody martyrdom, He requires only that thou endure patiently this uneasiness, this coldness, this harsh word. Bear thy Cross "day by day," and resemble not those who consent to bear it for a while, but cast it off if it continue to press heavily upon them. Fools, they know not that in casting away the Cross given them by the LORD, they are taking up another, more heavy and difficult to bear! As for thee, when the weight of thy Cross presses too heavily upon thee, and thou beginnest to sink under it, have recourse immediately to thy LORD JESUS in prayer, and ask of Him strength to bear it with resignation and merit. Remember then what S. Paul says: "I reckon that the suf-

[1] S. Luke ix. 23.

ferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us :"[1] and then be filled with courage.

There are many souls, says a devout author, who love JESUS CHRIST, so long as the balmy air of spiritual sweetness continues to play upon them, but if it cease, if there come some adversity or desolation, in which the LORD withdraws Himself from their sight to try them, if in short He deprives these souls of their usual consolations, they forsake prayer, communions, mortifications, and give themselves up to sadness and lukewarmness, in seeking the pleasures of this world. But such souls love themselves more than CHRIST ; those on the contrary who love GOD not with an interested love, nor for the consolations which He gives, but with a pure love, and only because He is worthy to be loved, never leave off their ordinary exercises of devotion, whatever dryness of soul or weariness they experience therein ; it suffices them to know that GOD is glorified in trying them thus, therefore they offer themselves to suffer this desolation, disgust, and weariness even till death, if such be the will of their sovereign LORD. They know that JESUS is just as gracious, while it pleases Him to leave them in desolation, as when He vouchsafes to grant them some consolations, and they find their happiness and satisfaction in sufferings, when they reflect that they bear them for the love of JESUS ; they then exclaim, " How sweet it is, Blessed SAVIOUR, to one who loves Thee, to suffer for Thee ! JESUS, Who diedst for me, why cannot I bear this for love of Thee ?" What is it after all, to suffer a few pains of body or mind or some interior grief ? It has been thought that we are

[1] Rom. viii. 18.

obliged to suffer somewhat for JESUS CHRIST, Who chose for love of us, the most painful life and most cruel death, without giving Himself the least relief, in order to show us, that if we incline to His love, we should love Him as He loved us. O Theotime, how dear to JESUS is the soul which suffers and loves: it is a gift above all other gifts, to love in suffering, and to suffer in loving! Amen.

CHAPTER XXVII.

JESUS NAILED TO THE CROSS.

"Where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, on either side one and JESUS in the midst."—S. John xix. 18.

WHEN our SAVIOUR had reached Calvary, where He was to finish His Sacrifice, and give us the most astounding token of His love, they left Him not time to take breath. They tore rudely from Him His garments, which adhered to His wounds, and thereby again renewed all His pain. They then commanded Him to lie down upon the Cross, in order that they might fasten Him to it. JESUS obeyed at once and without resistance: He stretched Himself upon that painful bed, His only pillow being His crown of thorns. His executioners threw themselves upon Him with a kind of fury; they first took His left Hand, according to general belief, and pierced it with a large nail through the nerves. These having contracted through violence of pain, and His right Hand not being capable of extending itself to the hole prepared in the other arm of the Cross, they had to draw His Hand;

it was necessary to do the same with the Feet, so that our LORD's whole Body was dislocated.

Yet was this Innocent Lamb silent: He uttered no complaint: He kept His eyes fixed on heaven, and offered to GOD for our salvation, His sufferings and His life. When He was nailed to the Cross, they dragged it to the pit, wherein it was to be planted. There they raised it up with cords, and lowered it abruptly into the pit. O, who can comprehend, who can describe, what agony was caused to our LORD, by this fall of the Cross! what rendings must have been its results! And it was for me, that JESUS willed to suffer thus. For me, who love Him so little and serve Him so ill. For me, who have so offended Him in my past life. For me, who grieve Him still daily by my lukewarmness. O my GOD, my GOD, my JESUS! I cast myself at the Foot of Thy Cross, and exclaim to Thee, "Mercy, mercy, to a miserable sinner, to an ingrate, have mercy!"

O my soul, look upon thy LORD, behold thy life hanging upon this wood. Behold, how nailed to this shameful gibbet, He finds neither resting place nor repose.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE: O my JESUS, how cruel is the death Thou sufferest! Vouchsafe then to tell me, what led Thee to submit to such frightful torments?

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED: My love for thee, O My son! it was, that has nailed Me to this Cross.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE: O my GOD, Thy words cover me with shame and confusion! Thy Heart is all love for me, and mine—Oh, teach me what I must do in gratitude for so great loving-kindness on Thy part.

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED: Love thou Me, and I shall be satisfied; love thou Me, and with joy I shall behold the fruit of My sufferings. Wean thy heart from

every created object, and excite in thy soul the desire to enjoy My Presence in heaven.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE: LORD, Thou seest my inmost heart; Thou seest my desire to love Thee. Blessed JESUS, kind Shepherd, loving Master, when shall I appear spotless and truly humble before Thee? When shall I deeply despise all sensible things for Thy sake? When shall I love Thee perfectly? When shall I fly to Thee with loving desire? When will the noise of the world entirely cease to me? When shall I be wholly set free from the cares and vicissitudes of the age? When shall my pilgrimage and sad captivity of this place of exile be ended? When shall I see the shadow of mortality decline, and the dawn of eternal day break forth? When shall I enjoy the vision of Thy beauty, and praise Thee eternally, and unimpeded, with Thy Saints? Amen.

Practical Resolutions.

LOVE OF GOD ALONE.

My dear Theotime, our LORD JESUS this day requires of thee that in gratitude for that love whereby He was nailed to the Cross for thee, thou shouldst love Him with thy whole heart, and not suffer any other love but His to find place therein. Fathom thy heart, and try if in very deed it is wholly GOD'S. Alas! it still loves creatures: it firmly adheres to them, and consents not, perhaps, to detach itself from them. And yet it is certain that nothing so impedes our union with GOD, as these attachments to earthly objects. O my dear Theotime, love GOD, love only GOD; or if thou lovest some creature, love him only in GOD: attach not thyself to him, and be ever ready to leave him, when our LORD pleases. The love of the

creature, when not founded in some degree in the love of GOD, is dangerous. O pray to the LORD to give thee a pure heart, empty of all which is not Himself or for Himself. Labour in earnest to tear from thy soul every ill-regulated affection, however slight it be. 'I may not then love my friends?' thou wilt perhaps say. I reply, Have friends, love them as much as thou wilt, but let it always be in GOD, and for GOD. Love them, but let it be always in endeavouring to lead them to serve JESUS CHRIST, and to go to heaven, and not for the pleasure thou findest in loving them; love them, but ask unceasingly of our good Master, grace to love them Christianly. Do not use thyself to regard them as being necessary to thy happiness here below; for, O Theotime, GOD alone, GOD alone should suffice to thee: out of Him is nothing but misery, weakness, and vanity. Say then often from the depth of thy heart, "O blessed JESUS, give me the grace to love Thee ever above all creatures, and to love my friends, as Thou wilt I should love them. Detach my heart from all that is not Thee."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE SILENCE OF JESUS, IN THE MIDST OF CONTEMPT, AFFRONTS, AND SUFFERINGS.

"He shall be led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth."—Isa. liii. 7.

WE have already spoken of the silence of JESUS in the midst of His sufferings; but so affecting is it to behold

this innocent Lamb opposing the rage of His executioners by an incomparable sweetness and patience, that we must pause a few moments to gaze upon this sight.

Let us begin with beholding Him in the house of Caiaphas. He is accused, in the presence of this Pontiff, of many crimes; and He preserves a profound silence. *Jesus autem tacebat.* He is loaded with contempt at Herod's court; He endures all without uttering a word. They cause Him to undergo a cruel scourging. He protests not against the injustice of such a punishment. The executioners in their rage inflict far beyond the number of stripes prescribed by the law, and He does not complain of it. The soldiers, most probably without the orders of Pilate, and merely to follow the impulse of their insolent brutality, plat a crown of long sharp thorns, and press it down on His Head, load Him with blows, and frequently spit upon Him: He ever maintains the same silence. They force Him to take on His shoulders a rough heavy cross, of which the length, according to S. Bonaventure and S. Anselm, was not under fifteen feet, and He at once and in silence obeys. He complains not of weakness, nor yet of His wounds, nor of the weight of His burden, nor of the distance of the road; but He takes up His Cross, and proceeds towards Calvary. We may suppose that many times during the journey, He sank beneath the weight.

What a lesson for Christians! if it happen that I have to suffer some sickness, a slight discomfort, I complain of it to every one. Have I experienced some misfortune? received some trifling insult? I must needs give vent to complaints, and even, perhaps, to murmurings against heaven. Alas, how different is my conduct from that of my Divine Master!

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE: O Lamb of GOD, give me the grace to imitate Thy example, and give me strength, for love of Thee, to keep silence, amid contempt, calumny, wrongs, and ill-treatment: give me grace to bear all with a patience equal to Thine own.

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED: My son, that which thou shouldst do, when there happens to thee one of these thousand contradictions with which human life is replete, is to "possess thy soul in patience."[1] The soul loses itself when it is fretful, whereas, when it submits without murmuring to all which happens with My permission, it possesses itself in patience, and possesses Me. To fret is to desire what one has not, or to refuse what one has. A fretful soul, is a soul given up to its passion, unrestrained any longer by faith and reason. What weakness! what error! as long as we will the evil we suffer, it is no evil: wherefore make it an evil, by ceasing to choose it?[2] Forget not these words which I formerly addressed to My Apostles, and which I now address to thyself, "Verily, verily I say unto thee, thou shalt weep and lament, but thy sorrow shall be turned into joy."[3] Even so, My son, afflictions are the lot of My elect upon earth, but their reward is rich.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE: LORD, I again say, I feel a desire to suffer all for the love of Thee, how is it then that I feel withal so great a repugnance to the same?

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED: My son, if thou accept with resignation, and without complaining, all the afflictions I send thee, thy repugnance to these will not render thee guilty, or the less resigned, but rather will increase

[1] S. Luke xxi. 19.
[2] Fenelon.
[3] S. John xvi. 20.

thy grace: they are the effect of thy natural weakness, for which thou shouldst humble thyself, but be not troubled, nor make thereof an occasion of grief. Suffer with patience and tranquillity, contempt, humiliating sickness, and death itself, and thou shalt prove to Me by this means, thy gratitude and thy love.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE: O LORD, woe is me! I was formerly blinded by my passions; but to-day Thy mercy has opened my eyes and enlightened me. Thou hast manifested to me the greatness of the evil I committed in basely forsaking Thee; Thou hast revealed to me that Thou art worthy of infinite love, by reason of Thy goodness and the love Thou hast shown to me. I repent, then, with my whole heart, for having offended Thee, and I love Thee better than all else on earth. O JESUS, give me grace to be ever thinking of Thy Passion, of the sorrows and ignominies Thou underwentest for me, in order that I may withdraw my affections from the good things of this world, and centre them wholly in Thee, Who art my sole and infinite good! I love Thee, O Lamb of GOD, offered on the Cross for love of me. Thou hast not refused to suffer for me. Give me grace in turn not to refuse to suffer for Thee all Thou wilt. I will complain no more of the crosses Thou sendest me. How can *I* complain of suffering; I who ought to have been many years in hell? Grant me the grace to love Thee, and then do with me whatever Thou wilt. "O who shall separate me from the love of JESUS CHRIST?" O LORD, sin alone can deprive me of Thy love. Suffer not, I beseech Thee, that such an evil befall me. Amen.

Practical Resolutions.

TO PRESERVE THE HEART UNDER ALL CIRCUMSTANCES, IN QUIETUDE AND PEACE.

My dear Theotime, learn this day, by the example of thy LORD JESUS CHRIST, to maintain profound peace, an unalterable calmness in the midst of contempt, contradictions, and ill-treatment; for where peace dwells, there GOD comes to abide.[1] If, then, thou wilt that He abide with thee, let not agitation enter within thy soul. When thou art assailed by any violent temptation, when thou feelest within thyself the warfare of passions: when thou discoverest thy sins, thy falls, thy unfaithfulness and miseries, beware of yielding to despondency and disquietude, but simply cast a look full of love upon JESUS crucified, and pray Him to establish thee in that peace which He alone can bestow. Give not way to ill-humour, if thou be kept waiting, if thou be contradicted, if thou be required to repeat the same thing many times, or if thine orders be ill-executed; but always maintain the same meekness and peace of soul. Let not this deep tranquillity forsake thee, if any sickness, or humiliation, or loss of property, or unexpected calamity befall thee: in order to this, reflect that GOD, Who watches unceasingly over thee, has permitted these events for thy greater good. Above all, O Theotime, preserve carefully this calm peace which is the portion of the children of GOD, in the midst of desolations and interior griefs, of disgust, dryness, temptations to sadness, melancholy, distrust of GOD's mercy:

[1] Psalm lxxvi. 2.

preserve it in the midst of the most painful crosses and most overwhelming afflictions. A beautiful sight is that of a servant of GOD, who in all the events of life appears the same, meek, calm, peaceful, perfectly submissive to the adorable will of Him Who directs all. If praised, his heart is not puffed up; if blamed, he promises to do better; if despised, humbled, insulted, he suffers it in silence and forgives. Peace is always in his heart: it shines upon his brow, and in his whole deportment; and frequently his mere presence, and a simple word from his lips, suffice to comfort an afflicted soul, and restore to it the peace it had long lost. Labour then, my dear Theotime, to acquire thyself that so desirable peace; ask it of thy LORD, and form the holy habit of submitting to all which happens to thee, saying, "GOD wills or permits this for His own good purpose: may His holy Name be praised!"

CHAPTER XXIX.

COMPLAINTS ADDRESSED BY JESUS ON THE CROSS TO ALL MEN.

"Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow."—Lam. i. 12.

SUCH are the words that JESUS CHRIST addresses to us poor exiles in this world of sin. O all ye, cries He to us from the height of His Cross, all ye who pass by in the path of life, stay awhile; lift your eyes to this Cross whereon I am nailed, and see if there be any sorrow like

unto Mine. My head is crowned with painful thorns which leave Me no repose. My feet and hands are transfixed with enormous nails. My body is one whole wound. My blood flows from every member, "the snares of death compass Me round about,"[1] and my soul is cast into fearful desolation.

Ye unhappy sons of Adam, who bear about with you the punishment of the sin of your first father, and who groan beneath the weight of the sufferings which your sins deserve, behold My sorrows, and compare them with your own. Ye complain of suffering, but have ye forgotten that ye are guilty and have deserved hell? Have ye forgotten that I, your GOD, have suffered first, and for love of you, and to teach you resignation?

You murmur because you are obliged to bear the inconveniences of hunger, thirst, poverty, fatigue, cold, and heat, but I have suffered these before you, and more than you. Was I not born in a stable in the middle of winter? Have I not always lived in indigence? Have I not gained My bread by the sweat of My brow?

Ye are tempted to abandon My service, because in it ye experience some disgust, and are troubled with some interior griefs, because ye must needs make some sacrifices contrary to flesh and blood. But have I lived in the midst of pleasures? Has it cost Me nothing to secure, not My own salvation, but yours? ye feel disgusts: but are these comparable to that which I endured for love of you in the garden of Gethsemane? Have ye ever been like Me, sorrowful unto death?—have the griefs of your souls ever caused your sweat to break forth in drops of

[1] Psalm cxvi. 3.

blood? When have they thrown you into the agony of death?

Ye are amazed that your friends betray and desert you, ye are saddened by receiving payments of ingratitude for the benefits ye confer! But I, was I not forsaken by My own disciples, at the very moment I had given them the greatest proof of My love in nourishing them with My own flesh? Have I not been unworthily treated by these same Jews whose sick I had healed, whose dead I had raised, and whom I loaded with loving-kindness?

Ye are irritated when little attention is shown you, when ye are humbled or despised, and your pretended merit is unappreciated, when those less clever and virtuous than yourselves are preferred before you. But I, Who am GOD, have I not been despised? Have I not been hooted in the streets of Jerusalem by a low rabble? Did not Herod treat Me as a madman? Have I not been placed on an equality with a murderer? Was not Barabbas preferred before Me?

Ye give way to rage, when a slur is put upon your reputation, when ye are insulted or ill-treated; but was it not said of Me, that I was one possessed with the devil, a glutton, a blasphemer, a seditious person? Did they not spit on My face? did they not load Me with blows and buffetings? was I not given up for a whole night to the insults and brutality of an enraged soldiery?

Ye murmur at a slight sickness; if it increases, if it is prolonged, ye lose patience. But have not I been cruelly scourged, crowned with thorns? and now do not ye behold Me nailed to the Cross? In your sufferings, your sicknesses, ye at least receive some consolation and re-

lief; from the presence of friends, and from remedies applied, and cares bestowed. Is it thus with Me, Who am your GOD? Where are My comforters?[1] where are the friends who ease and share My sufferings? where the remedies to alleviate My pain? I am alone and forsaken: instead of words of consolation, I hear blasphemies.[2] I am oppressed by insults and outrages; I am mocked; I am presented with gall and vinegar. . . . Have ye a right to complain and murmur because ye have to drink some drops of a cup of bitterness which I have drained? Is it not rather just that for love of Me ye should bear a slight portion of that Cross I refused not to bear alone for the love of you? Answer Me.

O Christians, if ye knew what it cost Me, of pain and sufferings and mental agony, to snatch you from hell, ye would comprehend all the extent of this My love: ye would comprehend My intense desire to possess your hearts; ye would realise what a fearful thing it is to fall into hell for eternity: ye would acknowledge, in fine, that the only thing ye have to do on earth is to serve and love Me. O My children, in the name of your own happiness, give Me your hearts, and love Me.

"I love Thee, O JESUS! I love Thee, and will ever love Thee more and more! Grant unto me, O LORD my GOD, Who art fairer than the sons of men, that I may love Thee as much as I desire, and as much as I ought. Thou art immeasurable, and the love of Thee should be that also, especially by us whom Thou hast so loved and so saved, and for whom Thou hast borne so much. O love ever burning and never quenched! Gracious CHRIST, good JESU, eternal Charity, and my GOD,

[1] Ps. lxix. 21; Lam. i. 2. [2] Ps. xxxv. 16.

kindle me with Thy fire, with the love of Thee, with Thy sweetness, with the affection and longing for Thee, with Thy charity, Thy joy, and holy exultation, with Thy piety and graciousness, with the all holy, all good, all chaste desire of Thee, so that full of the graciousness of Thy love, and warmed with the flame of Thy charity, I may love Thee, my most sweet and lovely LORD, with all my heart, with all my soul, and with all my strength: ever having Thee in my heart, and bearing Thee ever before mine eyes, with much contrition of heart and expression of sorrow, with much reverence and godly fear, so that there may be no room for any love but Thine." Amen.

Practical Resolutions.

OF EAGERNESS.

I have spoken to thee in the preceding chapter of the peace of the soul, I will now speak of a very common error, even with persons who make a profession of religion, and one which is capable in itself of opposing an invincible obstacle to the indwelling of this spiritual peace; it is a *too great eagerness*. If, therefore, thou wilt acquire and maintain this inward peace, avoid over-eagerness.

1st. *In thy employments.* Seek not to do and to undertake everything at once; give each thing the time it requires, and long not to see it already finished when it is scarcely begun, for nothing casts trouble and distraction into a mind so much as these passionate and eager longings. Take not upon thyself too great a multiplicity of employments, which thou wouldst be unable to fulfil.

2ndly. *In thy good works.* Do good, but do it with weight and measure; and it will thereby be the more useful. When thou hast resolved to undertake something which thou believest to be for the glory of GOD and the salvation of a fellow-creature, move not heaven and earth, if I may so speak, to arrive at once at the end thou proposest to reach, but always act with calmness. Take in this, our LORD JESUS CHRIST Himself for an example, Who waited thirty years before He announced His Gospel to the world, and laboured directly for the salvation of souls. When thou givest good advice to some one, and he seems to make no use of it, lose not thy peace for that reason, but go on charitably, rendering him the same service, GOD will do the rest. Zeal for our own progress in holiness and for our neighbour's conversion, is a virtue, so long as it is calm and resigned to the will of GOD: but if it be an impatient zeal, or a zeal without discretion or prudence, which aspires to make, in a day, a perfect saint of a heinous sinner, and which will not wait for the time marked out by the wisdom of the Most High; it is then, alas! a false zeal, and thou must beware of it, for it casts disorder into the soul. Neither be too eager in thy devotional exercises, while yielding to a desire to multiply them too much: follow in this, as in all else, the advice of thy pastor, and let these words of S. Francis de Sales be well engraved on thy memory; "*it is not by the multiplicity of the things we do, that we advance in holiness, but by the fervour and purity of intention with which we do them.*"

CHAPTER XXX.

Our Lord prays for His Executioners.

"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."—S. Luke xxiii. 34.

Our Lord had just been nailed to the Cross: He saw the authors of His torment, and His executioners, encircling Him. He cast a look upon them, then raised His eyes towards heaven and cried, "Father!" He had preserved silence while they were crucifying Him; now He breaks it, and calls upon His Father; listen to His supplication. Does He say to Him, "Father, Thou art witness of My sufferings, and of the shameful wrongs they heap upon Me, and Thou knowest My innocence; let the weight of Thy vengeance fall upon this impious people?" No, such was not the prayer of Jesus. O Christian soul, who dost meditate upon this, consider, and learn to realize the infinite mercy of our Saviour: "Father," He cries, "forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

O how great was the love which consumed the heart of our gracious Redeemer, since in the heat of His torments, and at the time when acuteness of agony took from Him the strength to pray for Himself, the power of His love towards men enabled Him to pray for His enemies, and He cried with a loud voice, "Father, forgive them!" He acted thus to show us that the love He bore to us was so great, that it could not be diminished by any kind of pain or torment, and to teach us likewise how inclined we ought to be to forgive our neighbour.

O gracious Lord, Thou art rich in mercy, and what

sinner, after this blessed example, shall despair of pardon for his sins? O my soul, take confidence, and let not thyself be cast down by the multitude of thy iniquities. Thou art agitated by a thousand different passions, tormented by a thousand temptations; it matters not, be trustful. Thou hast still a secure refuge in the wounds of thy LORD: fly thither for shelter, for they are the tokens of His love for thee. What mayest thou not hope from thy SAVIOUR, now that thou bewailest thy sins, knowing, as thou dost, that He forgave those who crucified Him, that He prayed for them so graciously?

But if thou wilt be answered more speedily, if thou wilt obtain more assuredly the favour of thy LORD, if thou wilt enjoy His love, then, like Him, forgive thou thy brother when he has offended thee. Pardon his trifling offences, that GOD may forgive thee thy great ones. Pray for his salvation, as thou prayest for thy own, and thou wilt be the nearer to JESUS, Who has commanded thee to love thy enemies and to pray for them. O with what great trustfulness shalt thou quit this life, if thou canst feel the consoling consciousness that thou hast patiently endured wrongs, affronts, and contempt, and thou hast always forgiven others.

LORD JESUS, Who hast said, "Forgive and ye shall be forgiven,"[1] vouchsafe to forgive me all the offences of which I have been guilty towards Thee, as I forgive with my whole heart those who have aggrieved me. I forgive them, as I pray Thee to forgive them likewise, and I am ready to do them all possible good, if I have the opportunity. In return, O my SAVIOUR, grant that I may be found in Thee.

[1] S. Luke vi. 37; S. Matth. vi. 14.

Practical Resolutions.

FORGIVENESS OF INJURIES.

"Let not the sun go down upon your wrath,"[1] said the apostle, but quickly forgive thy enemy who has offended thee, if thou wilt that GOD forgive thee. Cherish not any hatred against thy neighbour, O Theotime, whatever be the evil he have done, but rather by the example of JESUS CHRIST, forgive him from the bottom of thy heart, and pray for him. Crush every desire of revenge in the bud, else thou wilt expose thyself to commit many sins. But, thou wilt say, I cannot so easily forgive my enemy: he has betrayed me, insulted me, dishonoured me, has done me all possible harm, I must be revenged. Thou wilt then revenge thyself? Come with me to the foot of the Cross; lift up thine eyes to JESUS crucified: hear the words which He utters, "FATHER, forgive them;" and dare after that to say, "I will not forgive, I will accomplish my revenge." If it were any one else I would readily forgive him, but this one is a wretch, who deserves not my friendship. And thou, O Theotime, suffer me to ask thee, dost thou deserve the friendship of JESUS CHRIST, after the many sins thou hast committed? Learn at least to forgive a slight offence, that GOD may forgive thy great ones. Am I then obliged to love one who loves me not, but who persecutes me? Yes, thou art obliged. Our Blessed LORD says, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you;

[1] Eph. iv. 26.

for if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?"[1] Well, I will forgive my enemy this once, but let him not repeat the wrong! My dear Theotime, not once only shalt thou forgive, but "seventy times seven,"[2] as said JESUS CHRIST, that is *every time*. Thou thyself needest at all times the mercy of GOD, therefore must thou at all times show forth thine, and use it towards all. I forgive him, but I have a retentive memory; I shall never forget what he has done to me. That is to say, thou art willing that GOD should never forget thy sins, for He will deal with thee as thou dealest with thy fellow-creatures. I forgive him, but I will not see him. What sayest thou, my dear Theotime? thou wilt not see thy enemy? thou turnest away thine eyes when thou meetest him? Wilt thou dare afterwards to pray to the LORD to cast upon thee a look of mercy? Reply. I wish him no ill. That is not enough, thou must wish him well, love him as thyself, be grieved if any one grieves him, prevent its being so if thou hast the power. Tear resolutely from thy heart, the least bitterness against thy neighbour, and pray most fervently for those who may be to thee a cause of trouble; forgive them, by the example of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and make excuses for them, for most often they act without intending to wound thee. If thou always forgivest, thou mayest then say to GOD with confidence, and without dread of refusal, "FATHER, forgive me my trespasses, as I forgive them that trespass against me."

[1] S. Matth. v. 44—46. [2] S. Matth. xviii. 22.

CHAPTER XXXI.

The Penitent Thief.

"Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom."—S. Luke xxiii. 42.

Such was the short prayer of the penitent thief, which by reason of its faith and trustfulness, drew forth an answer from our Lord, "This day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise."[1] He had asked to be merely remembered, and Jesus promised him His kingdom. Our good Lord is abundant in His gifts. He ever inclines to give more, far more than we ask of Him. But who will not be struck with wonder at the depth of the counsels of God? At the moment when the penitent thief said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom," our Divine Saviour was in a condition of unexampled affliction and humiliation. His disciples had forsaken Him; one of them had betrayed and sold Him, another had denied Him three times, the Jews uttered blasphemies against Him, the Gentiles derided Him, and scarcely any one believed in Him. It was then at the very time when Jesus was by nearly all who had known Him, disesteemed, that the penitent thief, inwardly enlightened by divine grace, acknowledged Him for his King and God. . . . The disciples of Jesus had long held converse with Him, had heard His wonderful doctrine, had a perfect knowledge of His life and miracles; nevertheless their faith was terribly shaken, when they saw their Lord nailed to the Cross; the penitent thief on the

[1] S. Luke xxiii. 43.

other hand had never heard the voice of JESUS, except when He prayed for His executioners; he neither knew of His doctrine nor of His miracles, and yet behold he exceeds the apostles in constancy, and makes a public profession of his faith. What a subject for serious reflection! Oh how this example should teach us that the weakest of men is strong with the grace of GOD, and that the greatest man is weak without it.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE: O my LORD, suffer me to say to Thee with the penitent thief, "Remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom!" Remember that I am one of those poor strayed sheep for whom Thou hast fasted, prayed, undergone the Bloody sweat, passed Thy whole life in labours, and for whom Thou art at present dying. Remember that "I am the work of Thy hands,"[1] and that Thou hast graven upon my forehead "the light of Thy countenance."[2] Remember me, O gracious JESUS! despise not my prayer, and grant me Thy love with the pardon of my sins.

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED: My son, I will answer thy prayer even as I answered that of the penitent thief, if like him thou abidest on thy cross. It is only by the Cross that thou canst reach heaven: none can attain to that great happiness of the elect without first having gone through much pain. I say again, thou canst only go to heaven by the way of the Cross. Take then thy cross: bear it with fortitude, humility, and love.

"Verily I say unto thee, This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." O blessed word, from the lips of JESUS! Happy thief! thy heart must have felt an ineffable consolation: thou must have awaited death with very

[1] Ps. cxix. 73. [2] Ps. iv. 7.

great peacefulness! May I myself one day hear that word, when I shall be lying on the bed of death! He dies in peace to whom CHRIST has made such a promise.

My GOD, the thought of the blessed death of the penitent thief inspires me with confidence in Thy mercy! It is not that for that reason I would presumptuously sin, or delay the moment of my entire return to Thee: assuredly not; be such a presumption far from me! But this thought makes me say within myself, since GOD has so graciously forgiven this thief on the cross, and promised him Paradise, wherefore should I fear to be rejected, I, a poor sinner? O LORD, the sight of my sins afflicts me, and I confess that their multitude would throw me into despair if I knew not the greatness of Thy mercies, and if I had not before my eyes so many examples of penitent sinners whom Thou didst receive with loving-kindness. Mary Magdalene cast herself at Thy feet, which she bathed with her tears, and Thou didst at once remit all her sins. Peter denied Thee thrice: but he wept for his sin, and immediately Thou restoredst him to Thy favour. They brought to Thee a woman taken in adultery, and Thou wouldst not condemn her, but sentest her away, charging her to sin no more. O most gracious JESUS, my mercy, my refuge, my protection, have mercy likewise upon me, for I am a great sinner. Remember me now that Thou art in Thy kingdom, and forsake me not in the hour of my death. When my strength begins to fail, and my voice to grow faint; when my eyes become dim, and my ears can hear no longer: in that dreadful moment about to usher in my eternity, O merciful JESUS, come to aid me. To Thee I commit the care of my last moments. Amen.

Practical Resolutions.

UNLIMITED TRUST IN THE MERCY OF GOD.

Happy, above all happy, is the faithful soul which meditates continually upon the love of GOD for us, and upon the greatness of His mercies! O my dear Theotime, would I could give thee a great idea of the loving-kindness, goodness, and compassion of our GOD! would I could inspire thee with great confidence in the mercy of JESUS, our gracious SAVIOUR! for alas, it is very certain that one thing which deters many souls from advancing in the love of our LORD is a servile fear which they cherish within themselves, and which causes them to behold in their Best Friend a rigorous Master, ever ready to treat them harshly. No: our LORD is not a rigid Master: He is a tender and compassionate FATHER. "The LORD is gracious and merciful: long-suffering and of great goodness: the LORD is loving unto every man, and His mercy is over all His works."[1] Apply thyself, O Theotime, to produce and nourish within thy soul an unlimited trust in the mercy of our LORD, and be persuaded that it is the will and good pleasure of this thy loving and compassionate Friend that thou shouldst cast thyself unreservedly upon His love. Thou wilt say, I fear by reason of my past sins. It is true thou must not cease to mourn for them: but since thou hast confessed them and hatest them, wherefore distrust thy good LORD by thinking He has not forgiven them? Do better: cast thyself at His feet as a penitent child casts himself at the feet of his offended father, and say to Him, "My kind LORD, I love Thee,

[1] Ps. cxlv. 8, 9.

and trust in Thy mercy." . . . How many faithful souls torment themselves with vain scruples respecting their prayers and other devotional exercises, who grieve the heart of our LORD by their continual distrust, and who would advance much more speedily and surely by a single act of confidence in GOD. O LORD! I will ever have confidence in Thee, even amid the greatest inward desolations, because I know Thou lovest me, and desirest my eternal happiness more than I desire it myself. Even so, O good LORD, I will trust in Thee, whatever may happen to me: I cast myself into Thy heart, and will remain there to my last breath. Such should be thy prayer under all circumstances, particularly in times of disgust, dryness, and temptation.

CHAPTER XXXIII.[1]

JESUS FORSAKEN BY GOD HIS FATHER.

"My GOD, My GOD, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"—S. Mark xv. 34.

THICK darkness miraculously covered the face of the earth: all nature, at the aspect of her dying Creator, stood in terror and consternation, but He, for three hours had kept deep silence. Suddenly He cries with a loud voice, "My GOD, My GOD, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" . . . O JESUS, how fearful must have been Thy sufferings when they, so to speak, forced Thee, so meek, so patient, so resigned, to make this complaint.

[1] Chapter XXXII. omitted here.

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED: My son, by those words I uttered no complaint, but they were for thy instruction. I willed thou shouldst comprehend how much it cost Me to win thy love, and merit for thee the grace that thou shouldst one day come and reign with Me in heaven. The pains I had to endure at My heart were extreme, nor could I move upon My Cross without much increasing them; but what were these agonies compared with those which filled My soul? I saw Myself forsaken by My Disciples, laden with wrongs by My own creatures, wearied with reproach by those I had overwhelmed with blessings: I foresaw in ages to come the many Christians who would trample the merits of My Passion under their feet: even thou thyself, My son, wast present to My mind. If thou knewest how many tears thou didst cause to flow from My eyes! if thou knewest how many sighs thou didst extort from My breast! I saw thee at the moment when thou wast committing such and such a sin: I saw thee resisting the voice of My SPIRIT, rejecting the overtures of My tenderness, prostituting to the love of creatures that heart which I had given thee to be My own, and which I was purchasing the possession of at such a price; I saw thee living far from Me, regardless of Me, plunging recklessly into eternal perdition.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE: O my LORD, wherefore can I not efface from the number of the days of my life those which I have spent in offending Thee so unworthily? Woe is me, O my GOD, it is impossible; and it will ever be a truth that I have revolted audaciously against Thee: it will ever be a truth that I contributed much to the sufferings of Thy Passion, and that I have deserved hell! Nevertheless, O my SAVIOUR, I trust in

Thy mercy, upon which I have so long cast myself. I hope Thou hast forgiven me those sins, which I hate with my whole heart; I hope that all the torments Thou hast endured for me will not be lost to me.

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED: My son, thou hast not yet heard to the end, the recital of all I had to suffer for love of thee. As I had resolved to drink to the dregs the cup of bitterness, I consented to submit to an agony surpassing all the rest. My Heavenly FATHER forsook Me. . . . . O My son! to suffer all the most dreadful torments, is, in a measure, nothing when heaven sustains human weakness, by inward consolation; but to suffer—and to suffer without consolation, is the most entire desertion, is a martyrdom which has no name. It was to make thee realise this martyrdom to which I submitted, that I cried, "My GOD, My GOD, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" . . . It will sometimes befall thee, that for all-wise reasons, I shall give thee to taste a very small portion of the bitterness of this My desertion; at these moments thou shalt only feel disgust and dryness in My service: thou wilt imagine that thou hast lost all, that thou art lost, that GOD has forsaken thee, that He has withdrawn His hand from thee. Then it will be the time, My son, when thou must imitate My example, and say to the LORD calmly and resignedly, "My GOD, my GOD, why hast Thou forsaken me?" It is then thou must resign thyself humbly to all it shall please the LORD to require of thee. Know well that thou never advancest more quickly and surely in the road to perfection, than when thou thinkest all is lost; know that I am never nearer to thee than when thou thinkest Me far off; and know also that thou canst never make Me a more accept-

able sacrifice, than by casting thyself, under these circumstances, unreservedly upon My providence, in renouncing all sensible consolation in My service, and in willing only that which I Myself will. Leave to My affection the care of assigning thee consolations and crosses, and always maintain in thy heart the remembrance of the inward desolation in which I willed to die for the love of thee. Thou wilt thereby derive great strength to bear thy trials, and thou shalt be able to say to Me, with perfect resignation, "My GOD, Thy will be done, not mine."

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE: There is one source of torment, O LORD, to which I have much difficulty in resigning myself. Although Thou art not ignorant of all that passes in my heart, yet will I tell Thee the cause of my torment; it is that I know not whether I am in Thy favour, and I have not an assurance that my sins are forgiven, and that I am acceptable in Thy sight. The thought that I might one day be a castaway, that I might be compelled throughout Eternity to hate and detest Thee; the thought of my damnation is to me so frightful, that I feel my heart sink whenever it offers itself to my mind, and that I reflect seriously upon it. O my good Master, forgive my presumption in addressing Thee such a prayer: but canst Thou not deliver me from so painful an anxiety? it would be so sweet to be assured of my salvation.

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED: Thy prayer is not a wise one, as thou wilt soon perceive. Hear then. A Roman lady once wrote to one of My ministers,[1] entreating him to obtain for her, by a revelation, the same favour thou hast asked of Me: like thee she wished to be assured

[1] It was S. Gregory the Great, Pope. She who thus wrote to him, was Gregoria, lady in waiting to the Empress.

of the pardon of her sins. The Prelate to whom she addressed herself, replied thus: "Thou askest of me a thing at once difficult and useless; difficult, because I am not worthy to have revelations; useless, because it is not meet thou shouldst be without uneasiness regarding thy sins, till the end of thy life, viz., till the period when thou mayest weep no longer. Thou must ever tremble on their account, and expiate them unceasingly by thy tears. Paul had been carried up into the third heaven; he had there learnt secret things, which mouth of man may not reveal, and yet trembling, he said, 'I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.' What, shall Paul tremble, and thou not tremble? Remember that security is the mother of negligence. It would be hurtful to thee to have in this life a security, which would cause thee to neglect the care of watching over thyself; for it is written, 'Blessed is the man who fears always;' and elsewhere, 'Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice before Him with reverence.' Therefore, it is necessary that during the time which thou hast to pass on earth, thy soul be not exempt from fear." Thou seest, My dear son, by this reply, how beneficial it is for thee to abide in doubt and uncertainty as to the forgiveness of thy sins. If thou hadst a complete assurance that I am with thee, by My grace, thou wouldst be much less solicitous to seek Me: thou wouldst be much less desirous to please Me, thou wouldst be less careful to avoid occasions of offending Me, and perhaps thou wouldst end by entirely forsaking My service. Be thou henceforward patient and submissive to My will; fulfil it well: be faithful to all thy duties, and be hopeful; thy reward is in My hands: I will not deprive thee of it.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE: LORD, I must then suffer and live like Thee in crosses and tribulations? Be it so. It is just that I should endure something for Thee, Who hast suffered so much for me. I deserve not Thou shouldst console and visit me; thus Thou dealest justly with me, in leaving me poor and desolate. Nothing is my due, but the rod and chastisement; for I have often and grievously offended Thee! Strike me, O my GOD! Lo, I am in Thy hands, and I bend beneath the rod which chastises me: for it is better to be chastened in this life than in the next. Thou knowest what tends most to my advancement, and how much tribulation serves to consume the rust of vices. Strike, then, O my GOD, if it be Thy good pleasure: deprive me of all consolation in this world, but suffer me not to be so unhappy as to be separated from Thee. I will no longer seek to live at ease; rather will I embrace all the sorrows and desolations which it shall please Thee to send me. I deserve not any consolation, I, who have so often while offending Thee, deserved the torments of hell: suffice it to me to love Thee, and to live in Thy favour. Let all men forsake me. But Thou, O my GOD, I beseech Thee, forsake me not. Alas, how could I live far from Thee, and without Thee? Accept graciously, O LORD, this desire of my heart, and fulfil it. Amen.

Practical Resolutions.

OF COURAGE IN INWARD DESOLATION.

Examine thyself, my dear Theotime, as to thy conduct during thy inward trials, and compare thy way of acting

with the instructions thy good LORD has thus given thee, both by His example and words. Be just towards thyself. Is it not true that when it happens to thee to be deprived of Divine consolations, thou forsakest thy devotional exercises, or else thou performest them slothfully, or in a formal manner? How often, in fact, has it happened that thou hast followed JESUS CHRIST, but afar off, and reluctantly, because thou no longer receivedst the sensible consolations which He grants chiefly to those who are beginners in His service, in order to help and encourage them? Humble thyself, therefore, for thy baseness, and resolve to serve Him henceforth with unchangeableness. During thine inward desolations, think of thy gracious SAVIOUR dying on the Cross, in the most dreadful desertion, and this thought will comfort thee: it will soothe thee, and thou wilt even realize happiness in being able to unite thy sufferings to His. Take courage, my dear Theotime; serve GOD even amidst dryness, disgust, desertion, contempt, sufferings and humiliations: take courage, and lift thine eyes to heaven: there awaits thee a dazzling crown of glory. Take courage, for all sorrow passes quickly away, whilst the delights of heaven will be eternal. Take courage: He counts thine every sigh, and not one shall be without its reward. Take courage, then, for how happy shalt thou one day be, when thou shalt behold time about to end, and thyself near to quit this world of exile. How happy wilt thou then be in remembering, that during ten—twenty—thirty years, thou wast constantly faithful to the service of thy Master, notwithstanding the sorrows, tribulations, drynesses, and disgusts which thou enduredst therein. How happy wilt thou be to know that thy labours and stripes are about

to cease, and that the hour of recompense is at length come. Yea, happy shalt thou be. Death, so hideous to the worldling and the sinner, shall be to thee full of sweetness; thou wilt see it approach without fear or agitation, but with resignation, calmness, and joy; it will come to seize thee with a kind of regard, and will present thee to JESUS CHRIST. Then thy gracious LORD will receive thee with loving-kindness, and will say to thee, "My son, thou hast striven much while on earth for the love of Me; thou hast withal been ever resigned, and faithful in My service: now, approach, come to Me, and lo! I place a crown of glory upon thy head. Come, for My Paradise and all its joys are thine for all eternity." O my dear Theotime, what a blessed reception. May it one day be thine, one day mine likewise; for so we may hope from the kind and infinite mercy of our GOD.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE THIRST OF JESUS ON THE CROSS.

"I thirst."—S. John xix. 28.

OUR Divine SAVIOUR was approaching His last moment. Soon would He have accomplished entirely the work of our redemption, in dying for us upon the Cross: when feeling Himself burning internally with the fever of violent thirst, caused by the extreme pain He had suffered for twenty hours, He cried, "I thirst!"

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE: LORD, did thirst cause Thee more anguish than the Cross? The one causes

Thee to complain, and Thou wast silent as to the other. What is then that thirst which thus torments Thee? I comprehend it: it is the ardent desire Thou hast for my salvation, for my spiritual advancement. Thou sayest to me affectionately, "My son, I thirst for thy love: give Me the comfort of it." O LORD, what answer have I hitherto made to this so loving invitation,—to this mild request? Alas! I imitate the Jews, who to quench Thy thirst, had the cruelty to offer Thee *vinegar* and *gall*.[1] Instead of loving Thee with all my heart, I weary Thee, perhaps, by living in unworthy pleasures. At least, my GOD, I share between Thee and creatures that heart which Thou willest to possess wholly. I refuse Thee the small sacrifices Thou requirest of me, and I lead an easy and unmortified life. O my GOD, I ask of Thee forgiveness for the past, and beseech Thee to aid me to do better for the future.

"Like as the hart desireth the water-brooks, so longeth my soul after Thee, O GOD! My soul is athirst for GOD, yea, even for the living GOD; when shall I come to appear before the Presence of GOD?"[2] O JESUS, Fountain of life! when will the moment arrive when in Thee my soul shall quench the thirst which consumes it, and refresh itself in the clear waters of Thy wisdom? "O GOD, Thou art my GOD, early will I seek Thee.[3] My soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh also longeth after Thee, in a barren and dry land. . . . O that I might behold Thy power and glory! For Thy loving-kindness is better than the life itself: my lips shall praise Thee. As long as I live will I magnify Thee on this manner, and lift up my hands in Thy Name. My soul shall be satis-

[1] S. John xix. 29. [2] Ps. xlii. 1, 2. [3] Ps. lxiii.

fied even with marrow and fatness; while my mouth praiseth Thee with joyful lips. Have I not remembered Thee in my bed, and thought upon Thee when I was waking? My soul hangeth upon Thee." I cannot live without Thee, LORD JESUS! I *thirst:* since Thou art the Fountain of life, vouchsafe to satisfy me. I thirst for Thy love; I desire to see Thee and possess Thee. When wilt Thou fulfil my desire? O when will come the happy day in which Thou wilt say to me with a voice of tenderness and love, "Enter thou into the joy of thy LORD,"[1] and possess His everlasting kingdom? Enjoy now an incorruptible felicity! Here are no more labours, grief, and sadness; here all tears are wiped away, and all longings fully satisfied. Alas! Thou wilt, O blessed JESUS, that I should remain yet in this world of exile. Thou wilt that I attain to eternal repose by mortification, crosses, and continued labours. Be it so; but deign, O my GOD, favourably to answer my prayer. My soul sighs for Thee, thirsts for Thee; vouchsafe to have pity on me. Thou alone canst refresh me; even Thou alone, my GOD. Amen.

Practical Resolutions.

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE.

Thou hast just seen, my dear Theotime, that our LORD JESUS CHRIST has a very ardent desire for thy salvation and spiritual advancement. It appears to me to be very just that thou shouldst strive to excite in thyself a similar desire, and labour to satisfy it. Now a wise and devout man says,[2] one of the principal and most effica-

[1] S. Matth. xxv. 23. [2] Rodriguez.

cious means we have of promoting our spiritual advancement, is "examination of conscience." Solomon says, "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and lo! it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down."[1] Such is the conscience of those who do not examine themselves: it is a vineyard which becomes fallow ground, and is filled with briars and thorns for want of being tilled. Alas! our corrupt nature is an evil soil, which in itself produces only weeds. We must always have the bill in our hand wherewith to cut, or root up, and this we do by means of self-examination. It is self-examination which cuts off the stem of vice, and drags up evil inclinations as they begin to shoot forth, and prevents bad habits from taking root. There are two kinds of examination; *particular*, and *general*. I will make you acquainted with both.

1st. *Particular self-examination* consists in examining ourselves each day upon some one virtue we have resolved to acquire, or some fault we desire to correct, in order to know if we have made progress or not. I will suppose, for example, that I have agreed to strive to acquire humility; this is the course I shall have to pursue. In the morning I shall make a firm intention to say and do nothing which can in the slightest degree feed my pride, and I shall pray to the LORD to bless my resolution. Towards noon I shall examine my conscience, to know how many times I have broken my resolution; then I shall write down the number of my failures, and humble myself for them, and resolve afresh to do better

[1] Prov. xxiv. 30, 31.

for the remainder of the day, and I shall commend myself to our LORD. In the evening I shall renew the self-examination, and write down the number of my relapses since the last time. In thus writing down each day the number of my falls, I shall be able, at the end of a given time, to compare day with day, week with week, month with month; and to ascertain for certain whether I am advancing or backsliding in the acquirement of humility. I shall dwell upon the examination of this one virtue so long as I feel a difficulty in bearing a humiliation, a reproof, a slight, or any other such thing; and I shall not give it up, were I to toil at it for many years, so long as I have not attained my object. Thou wilt perhaps urge as an objection, that whilst thou art using all thy endeavours to acquire humility, thou art neglecting to acquire other graces. No, my dear Theotime, such will not be the case; for all Christian graces are linked together, and in labouring earnestly and especially to acquire one, thou art labouring to acquire all. Neglect not, then, the practice of this *particular self-examination*, and thou wilt soon realise the precious benefits of it.

2ndly. *General self-examination* consists in examining ourselves every night, before bed-time, upon the faults we have committed in the course of the day, and in exciting within ourselves contrition and a good purpose. Never omit this *general self-examination* more than the *particular* one; but let me particularly caution thee not to fall into the error of those who think they have done all, when they have minutely ascertained their sins, and who take little pains to ask GOD'S forgiveness of them, and to labour not to fall back into them; and yet this is the most essential part of self-examination, and that to which thou shouldst most devote thyself.

MODEL FOR EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE.

Our FATHER—What was my first thought to-day? Alas! it was not of GOD; I was busy thinking of the pleasure I should have in seeing so and so,—in seeing such a person. After that, prayer full of wandering thoughts and disinclination; thence prayers delayed and ill-performed. Afterwards dissipation of mind throughout the day, and many faults of all kinds. O my GOD! is it thus I serve Thee? I ever set the world, creatures, and myself before Thee. O forgive me, LORD! To-morrow I resolve it shall not be so: with the help of Thy grace I shall watch more over myself, and my first thought shall be of Thee. Have I prayed to-day? . . . . Yes. . . . My GOD, I thank Thee for this grace. . . . . No. . . . Behold what I am: I promise much, but I keep not my promise. My GOD, have compassion on my weakness, and forget my continued unfaithfulnesses. I sincerely repent of this one in particular; to repair it, I resolve to-morrow to perform my meditation before leaving my chamber. . . . What resolutions did I make this morning? . . . Have I thought of them during the day? Have I adhered to them? . . . Yes. . . . [I thank Thee] . . . No. . . . [act of humiliation, contrition, and good purpose.] . . . [Examine thyself in a similar way upon Holy Communion, and upon thy Confession.] In my repasts did I not seek to gratify my appetite? Did I mortify it? &c. My GOD, I am ashamed of thus offending Thee, even while Thou loadest me with Thy benefits! . . . . How many poor are there who serve Thee more fervently than I do, to whom Thou givest only a piece of dry bread to appease their great hunger? Yet they praise Thee, and eat it with thankfulness. . . . My table

is daily covered with numerous savoury viands; there may be nothing wanting to my desires, and I scarcely remember to thank Thee for all Thy gifts! I do it with so much coldness. . . . O my GOD, my FATHER, this once again have compassion on Thy child's misery! . . . To-morrow I will, to punish myself, if I can do so without ostentation, deprive myself of such and such a dish which I like very much. . . . In my conversation, have I nothing to reproach myself with? Here a slight untruth, a petty slander, a jeer, a criticism; partly, perhaps, from jealousy: . . . there, a word of vanity—a word full of harshness, of fretfulness, of self-conceit. . . . . I talked of myself upon such an occasion unnecessarily; . . . upon such another occasion I opened my heart too unreservedly. GOD reproached me with it. . . . I spoke too harshly to a servant; what did I gain by it? If I had been silent upon such an occasion, or spoken calmly and gently, GOD would not have been angry; &c. [Here make acts of contrition and good purpose.] . . . How many fretful words and deeds, and slight ebullitions of temper towards my servants, my children, and the persons around me! O my GOD! . . . And I go to holy Communion so frequently! And in right earnest I will correct myself. . . . And the duties of my station? . . . and my adherence to rules laid down? . . . and my devotions? . . . [Review all these things rapidly, judge thyself very severely, and make a resolution to do such and such a thing especially,] &c. In conclusion, make a general act of contrition, and lie down to sleep in the peace of the LORD. This examination should only occupy five or six minutes.

CHAPTER XXXV.

The Sixth word which Jesus pronounced on the Cross.

"When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished."—S. John xix. 30.

Jesus when the moment was come to yield up His last sigh, said with a dying voice: *It is finished.* In pronouncing these words, there passed in review before His mind, the whole course of His life: the weariness, the poverty, the sorrows, the ignominy, He had suffered, and He renewed once more the offering up of these to His Father for the salvation of the world. Then turning His thoughts again to us, He repeated *Consummatum est,* as though He had said, O mankind, all is finished; all is accomplished; the work of your redemption is achieved; Divine justice is satisfied. Paradise is opened: and lo, this is your time, the time for those who love.[1] It is time at length, O men, that ye should begin to love Me. Love ye Me then, for I can do no more to be loved by you. See all that I have done to gain your love; for you I have spent a life full of every kind of tribulation, at the close of My days before dying, I have consented to shed forth My blood, to be spit upon, to have My body mangled, to be crowned with thorns, to suffer every agony upon this wood whereon thou seest Me. What more can I do? one only thing more; to die for you; and behold I am about to die. And ye, O My sheep, love ye Me because I cannot do more to be loved by you. All is

[1] Ezekiel xvi.

finished, said the pious Thaulerus, all that justice required, all that charity demanded, all that could make love shine forth. O holy LORD, if I could likewise say in dying, "LORD, it is finished, I have done all Thou hast given me to do: I have borne my cross with patience, I have striven to please Thee in all!" O my GOD, were I to die now, I should die indeed dissatisfied with myself, because I could say nothing of all this with truth. But shall I then always act ungratefully towards Thee? I beseech Thee give me grace to please Thee during the years which I have yet to live, that when death comes, I may say to Thee, that from this day forth I have tried to live according to Thy holy will. If in time past I have displeased Thee, Thy death reassures me: for the future I will not betray Thee. But from Thee it is that I hope for the gift of perseverance; by Thy merits, O JESUS, I ask it of Thee, and I hope for it. Amen.

Practical Resolutions.

TO ASK FREQUENTLY FOR FINAL PERSEVERANCE.

Perseverance, my dear Theotime, is the greatest of gifts, and to it alone is granted the crown of glory. It is a gift which thou canst not deserve, but which GOD is ready to give thee if thou ask it. Form then the habit, from this day forth, of asking it frequently of our LORD. It is certain, that if thou cease not to ask for it, it will be granted thee, according to our LORD'S promise, "Ask and ye shall receive." But rest not satisfied with prayers only, but add to these good works and a holy life; otherwise it would only be to tempt GOD. Does a slothful Christian,

one who lives lukewarmly, making no scruple of little sins, deserve to be heard when he asks for perseverance? I repeat, my dear Theotime, live holily and fervently, and then await with humble confidence this grace of final perseverance; since assuredly thy LORD will not refuse it thee. Avoid occasions of sin, be faithful in fulfilling with punctuality all the duties of thy station, bear thy Cross patiently, and GOD will do the rest. Never indulge those sad thoughts, that perhaps one day thou wilt be damned, that sooner or later thou wilt forsake the LORD's service. These contract the heart, and produce no good. Trust in GOD; I cease not to repeat it, because it is this which our merciful FATHER demands of us. He loves us more than we can love ourselves: let us repose in peace in His love.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

OUR LORD COMMENDS HIS SOUL TO HIS FATHER.

"FATHER, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."—S. Luke xxiii. 46.

ALL that our LORD said or did in His mortal life, He said and did to show forth His love for us, and not only that, but for our instruction. He therefore uttered no word, which served not, upon deep reflection, to lead us to a higher perfection. Let us stay then to consider these words, which He then addressed to His heavenly FATHER, "FATHER, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." It is as though He said, "My FATHER, I give Myself up

to Thee unreservedly. I have finished upon earth all Thou hast required of Me, and there remains nothing for Me but to die; but nevertheless, if Thou wilt that My soul remain yet longer to suffer in My body, I yield to Thy good pleasure: if Thou wilt that I pass out of this life, to enter into glory, and to receive the reward of My labours, I equally yield to Thy holy will. Lo, I am ready to do all Thou requirest of Me."

O what a beautiful example is this of self-surrender to GOD, and of entire conformity to His Will. What an excellent preparation for death. "My GOD, I am willing to live if it be Thy good pleasure, and I consent to die, if Thou choosest thus." LORD JESUS, give me grace to utter from the depth of my heart these words, before I die: give me grace to say like Thee, "FATHER, into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

How happy we should be, exclaims S. Francis de Sales, if when we dedicate ourselves to GOD's service, we would begin by committing our spirit, absolutely and unreservedly into the Hands of His Divine goodness. For all our slowness in spiritual perfection proceeds from the want of thus wholly surrendering ourselves. And yet the truth is, that if we wish to make progress in perfection, we must begin, continue, and end our spiritual life in the exercise of this virtue, in imitation of our LORD, Who always practised it in a manner perfect and admirable.

We sometimes meet with Christians, who, upon entering GOD's service say to Him indeed, "LORD, I commend my spirit into Thy hands;" but upon condition that Thou wilt always give me consolations and not sufferings, and that Thou wilt likewise give me superiors who will be according to my inclination, and that nothing

shall cross my will. . . . Alas, what dost thou? seest thou not that this is not really to surrender the soul into GOD's hands as our LORD did? Knowest thou not, that it is from these our reserves, that spring for the most part all our troubles, disquietudes, and other similar imperfections? For, if things do not happen as we expect them, and promise ourselves, sadness quickly lays hold of our unhappy spirits. And from whence comes this, but that we have not wholly surrendered ourselves into GOD's hands? How happy should we be, if we faithfully practised this virtue; we should, doubtless, by means of it, attain to the great perfection of S. Catherine of Sienna, and S. Frances, and S. Angela de Foligny, and of many other holy souls, who were by this self-renunciation, and perfect self-surrender, like wax in the hands of our LORD, and of their superiors, receiving all the impressions which were made upon them.

Let us be so too, and let us say with our Blessed Master in all circumstances: "My GOD, I commit my spirit absolutely and unreservedly into thy hands. *In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum.* Wilt Thou that I be in dryness or in consolation? that I be crossed, or troubled with dislikes and difficulties? that I be loved or not? that I be obedient in things great and small, easy or difficult? Into Thy hands I commend my spirit. Wilt Thou that I employ myself in the duties of the active, or the contemplative life? Into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

Let those then who are employed in the duties of active life not desire to leave it to give themselves to the contemplative life, and let those who are contemplative, not to quit their state of contemplation, until GOD command

it. Let us be silent when it is right to be so, and let us speak in season.

If we act thus, we may well say at the hour of our death, according to our LORD's example, "My GOD, it is finished: *Consummatum est.* I have fulfilled all which was Thy Divine Will, in the events Thy Providence has allotted to me. What more remains to me to do, but to commend my soul into Thy hands, towards the decline and end of my life, as I have commended it to Thee ever since the beginning? Even so, my GOD, I commend into Thy hands, my spirit, my heart, my soul, all that I am, and all I possess, in order that Thou mayest dispose of them according to Thy good pleasure. Let me be humbled, or exalted, despised or esteemed, forgotten or cared for, in sadness or in joy; all, O LORD, is alike to me, provided I may do Thy Will. Amen."

Practical Resolutions.

ENTIRE SURRENDER OF OURSELVES TO THE LOVE OF OUR LORD.

Thou hast often seen, my dear Theotime, a little child in his mother's arms; thou hast doubtless admired the self-surrender with which he there enjoys a calm repose. Whatever danger he may incur, he is always tranquil, and his sleep is not troubled; if any one wake him and threaten him, he puts his little arms round his mother's neck, hides his head in her bosom, and feels himself safe. It is that he feels he is with his mother, and that she loves him too much not to defend him from every danger. Behold herein, O Theotime, the reflection of what thou oughtest to be with respect to JESUS. Never had

mother so much tenderness for her only son, as this loving SAVIOUR has for thee. Go, then, and cast thyself trustfully into His arms; confide to His compassionate heart thy sins, miseries, and imperfections. When the devil uses all his efforts to sever thee from Him, cling still closer to Him; in the midst of temptations, say to Him, "My loving Master, I am oppressed; undertake for me."[1] Accustom thyself to see, in all events of life, the Hand of Almighty GOD directing them; and always say to thyself, "If a hair of my head cannot fall without the permission of my GOD,[2] how much stronger reason have I to feel that such and such a thing has not happened to me except by His will. Now I am His child; He loves me, He is wise: let Him deal according to His own good pleasure. I yield myself up to Him anew and unreservedly, being persuaded that I have nothing to fear, so long as I shall remain beneath the shadow of His wings." O how many Christians there are who would spare themselves much sorrow and torment, and not render themselves guilty of so many sins, if they would, at all hazards, use this language! As for thee, my dear Theotime, say with JESUS CHRIST, during thy life and at the hour of thy death, "My GOD, I commit my soul into Thy hands." In the time of temptation and of inward trial, say no more, as aforetime, The LORD has forsaken me, my GOD has deserted me; but place before thine eyes these words, which thy gracious and merciful SAVIOUR addresses to thee: "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands; thy soul is continually before Me."[3]

[1] Isa. xxxviii. 14. [2] S. Luke xxi. 18. [3] Isa. xlix. 14—16.

Whatever, then, may befall thee, my dear Theotime, have confidence always in JESUS. Art thou in dryness and spiritual darkness? trust in JESUS; draw near Him, and He will restore thee unction, and the enlightenment of His grace.[1] Art thou overwhelmed with a thousand temptations? trust in JESUS, and He will not suffer thee to be tempted above that thou art able: He will sustain thee, and thou shalt enjoy the fruits of the victory.[2] Do the devil, the world, and the flesh harass thee on all sides? trust in thy LORD, and soon "a thousand" of thine enemies "shall fall beside thee, and ten thousand at thy right hand."[3] I have said, and I shall never be weary of saying, trust in JESUS. "Cast all your care upon Him, for He careth for you,"[4] and loveth you. Never has any trusted in Him and been confounded. O Theotime, repeat continually with mouth and heart these and similar words: "Praise be to my blessed LORD! He is my FATHER and my best Friend. Though He knows all my miseries, He loves me, and wills my eternal happiness. O praise be to Him! I will confide in His mercy."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

JESUS DIES.

"And He bowed His Head, and gave up the ghost."—S. John xix. 30.

OUR LORD had already spent nearly all His Blood: He was weighed down by the torments He had under-

[1] Ps. xxxiv. 6.
[2] 1 Cor. x. 13.
[3] Ps. xci. 7.
[4] 1 S. Pet. v. 7.

gone. His chest contracted, His breathing became difficult: and as He was not lying on a bed, but was suspended in the air by nails, which tore His Hands and Feet, and as He had not a moment's repose, His pains were much greater than all those which men go through in their death agony. For the acuteness of pain being gradually blunted in us as death approaches, we cease to feel by degrees as we cease to be conscious; but our SAVIOUR had His mind collected until His last breath, and only ceased to suffer when He ceased to live. Some minutes before He yielded up His spirit, His Head bowed, His eyes began to close, and His lips became cold and livid. Soon after, He raised His head and His eyes to heaven, gave a loud cry, and letting His head fall a second time on His breast, *He gave up the ghost.*

My soul, draw near to the Cross; look upon thy JESUS and thy GOD; He has just expired for love of thee!

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE: LORD JESUS, after having beheld Thee die on the Cross for love of me, methinks I may hope from Thee all the grace necessary to my salvation; methinks I may trample under foot those fears of eternal damnation which the devil sometimes puts into my mind. O LORD, how terrible it is to think that I may one day be separated from Thee! How fearful the fate of a poor sinner who has displeased Thee, and knows not if Thou hast shown him mercy! He sees hell open before him, and knows not whether to hope in Thy mercy, or dread Thy justice.

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED: My son, My beloved son, wherefore holdest thou such language? In what have I merited to be considered by thee a hard and severe Master? Behold, I die for love of thee, and yet thou

venturest not to trust in My loving-kindness! I know thou hast offended Me: but knowest thou not then My Heart? Thou art yet ignorant of the facility with which that Heart forgives the repentant sinner? O My son, I intreat thee, cast thyself with more self-surrender into the arms of My mercy.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE: Yea, O LORD, I understand that I shall never more be in peace, till I have intrusted Thee wholly with the care of my eternal salvation. Graciously, then, drive for ever from me that servile fear which brings Thee before my eyes as a GOD ready to punish the smallest offences; whereas Thou art a FATHER full of tenderness for Thy children, and of compassion for their weaknesses. . . . But O my GOD! gracious JESUS! suffer me to pour out my heart into Thine. I often feel in Thy service moments of inward darkness which are very painful: then my soul becomes troubled; it seems to me as though I love Thee no longer,—as though I have been unfaithful to Thee, and have committed some mortal sin; and I am tempted to give myself up to melancholy, to believe myself damned, to leave off serving Thee. What must I do in such cases?

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED: My son, lift up thine eyes to My Cross, and begin by making an entire act of resignation to My will: then strive to feel confidence in My love. How! My son, thinkest thou that, if I had willed thy damnation, I should have died upon a Cross, amidst so many agonies? Fear not, fear not, My child, I love thee with the infinite love of Him Who is GOD. In permitting these troubles, and the darkness of thy soul, I design them for thy good: fear nothing, for I regard thee as the apple of Mine eye. Oh, if thou knewest

how I love a faithful soul, which through all its miseries and imperfections, is not discouraged, but says to Me unceasingly, "My gracious LORD, I trust in Thee, and shall not be confounded;" if thou knewest with how many precious gifts I enrich it, how earnestly wouldst thou strive to become firmly established in a loving trust in My goodness!

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE: O good JESU, Thou knowest the depth of my heart, Thou knowest how I love Thee, and how ardently I desire to see Thee in heaven. How is it, then, that I fear death, and dread Thy judgment?

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED: My judgment is doubtless terrible for hardened and impenitent sinners; but gentle and full of mercy for those who love Me. I will, then, that each time the thought of the judgment presents itself before thee, thou shouldst make an act of surrender of thine everlasting condition to My Fatherly goodness. This token of trust on thy part will be very acceptable to Me, and to thyself very useful; inasmuch as none ever trusted in Me and were confounded.[1] As to the fear of death, it is a natural fear; I felt it Myself, because I was man, and because I willed likewise to merit for thee the gift of resignation. It is also produced in thee, by the attachment wherewith thou clingest to creatures: strive to detach thyself from all, and death will seem to thee a desirable thing. Detach thyself from thy riches, thy lesser enjoyments, thy friends, thy family, and even from thy children. Confide to My heart the care of thy interests, and of all those who are dear to thee, and then mayest thou say to Me, "LORD, now lettest Thou Thy

[1] Ecclus. ii. 10.

servant depart in peace, if it be Thy good pleasure to call him to Thyself."

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE: LORD JESUS, behold Thy poor child at the foot of Thy Cross. Cast on me one look of kindness and bless me. I make Thee the sacrifice of my life, and I am ready to die, as soon as it shall please Thy holy Will. If Thou willest to have me yet longer on earth, be Thou praised; only give me grace to employ the time in loving and pleasing Thee. If Thou willest that I should die soon, be Thou equally praised. I submit to death, because Thy will is that I should die.

I will to die, that I may make up in my body that which is behind of the sufferings of CHRIST.

I will to die, in order that I may cease to offend and displease Thee in this life.

I will to die, in order to show Thee my gratitude for all the benefits and kindnesses with which Thou hast loaded me in spite of my unworthiness.

I will to die, to prove to Thee that I love Thy will above my own. Above all, I will to die, that I may go to my rest, and there love Thee everlastingly, and with all my strength; for I hope to enter into the abode of happiness, where I shall be certain of never ceasing to love Thee throughout eternity.

I beseech Thee, O my SAVIOUR, I beseech Thee, by Thy sacred wounds, by Thy pains of death, grant that I may die in Thy peace and love. Thou hast bought me at the price of Thy blood, suffer me not to be lost, O most gracious JESUS, suffer me not to be separated from Thee. Whensoever my soul shall go forth from my body, vouchsafe to receive it Thyself, and give it a reception full of kindness, and say to it, "My child, all thy sins are for-

given and blotted out; come with Me into My Paradise, where I will love thee, and thou wilt love Me throughout eternity."

My beloved Redeemer, Thou Who hast willed to die for me, and Who, notwithstanding my sins, receivest me still into Thy favour; I cling to Thy Cross, and embrace Thy feet pierced with nails. Favourably, by that love Thou hast shown me, unite me to Thyself in such a manner, that nothing may be able to remove me from Thee. Cause me, henceforth, to commune continually with Thee: cause all my thoughts to be Thine; in a word, cause all the affections of my heart to rebound to Thyself, that in all things I may seek Thee only. O give me grace to live always in grief, for having offended Thee: give me grace to be ever kindled with love to Thee, Who hast given Thy life for love of me. Amen.

Practical Resolutions.

PREPARATION FOR DEATH.

We must die, O Theotime: JESUS died; the blessed Virgin died; all the Saints are dead, thou also must die. I say not this with intention to frighten thee, for I know that the righteous man lives with patience, and dies with joy. I speak to thee thus, only to remind thee in the words of JESUS CHRIST, "Be ye also ready," for ye know not the day nor the hour of your death.[1] With the generality of Christians, to be ready signifies to have no burden of deadly sin. But to a faithful soul, which professes to love JESUS with a generous love, to be ready,

[1] S. Matth. xxiv. 44.

signifies to have no attachment to any lesser sin, to be bound no longer to any earthly thing, in a human and irregular way, or at least to strive to attain to that state; it is to be perfectly submissive to the will of GOD, as to health or sickness, life or death. Answer me now, my dear Theotime, thinkest thou, that thou art ready? If thy conscience should answer, *yes*, then bless the LORD for it; He has vouchsafed thee great and precious grace; but if it answer, *no*, hasten to put thy hand to the work, for alas, the Master may appear, "and, indeed, He will come at a moment when thou lookest not for Him."[1] I will give thee some rules, which will greatly help thee to attain thy end:—

1st. Search thy conscience within its most hidden folds and see if it give thee no good ground for self-reproach; if it cause thee any disquietude, make a good confession, and afterwards maintain thyself in peace, leaving all the rest to the mercy of GOD.

2nd. Make thy will, if thou hast one to make, save to renew it every year if needful. Set thy temporal affairs in such excellent order, that thou shalt be always ready to give an exact account to whoever may have the right to require one of thee. By this means, thou wilt be spared much uneasiness, should death lay thee low suddenly, as it has done so many others who looked not for it.

3rd. Discharge all thy debts, if thou have any, and make reparation for whatever wrong thou mayest have done thy neighbour in his property, &c., &c.

4th. Examine what are those things to which thou yet clingest, and generously detach thy heart therefrom; after all, thou must needs one day leave these riches, these fine

[1] S. Luke xii. 40.

estates, these grand houses, these children, these friends. O learn to give them up at once, and thou shalt please GOD thereby.

5th. Examine what are those things which, at the hour of thy death, thou wilt wish thou hadst done, and do them without delay: likewise those which thou wilt wish thou hadst not done, and abstain therefrom now.

6th. Think frequently of death; this thought seems terrible at first; but it soon becomes sweet and comfortable: besides, that it tends singularly to detach us from all things.

7th. Frequently make acts of resignation to death such as thou hast just read in Chapter XXXVII. of this book; they are pleasing to GOD, draw down upon us great graces, and familiarize us with the thought of our last moment.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

OUR BLESSED SAVIOUR COMPLAINS OF THE INGRATITUDE OF SINNERS, AND INVITES THEM TO CAST THEMSELVES INTO HIS ARMS.

"And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt Me and My vineyard. What could have been done more to My vineyard that I have not done in it?"—Isa. v. 3, 4.

To whom does our LORD hold forth this language, and to whom does He address these words? To me, a poor sinner, He speaks; to me, He says in acts of earnest tenderness, "My child, what more can I do for thee?

Wilt thou now fear Me with thy whole heart? wilt thou cease to crucify Me afresh by thy sins? O My son, after so many tokens of My love, wherefore hast thou lived so long away from Me? What have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? Testify against Me."[1]

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE: My GOD, my GOD! I have nothing to answer. "I am guilty, and groan: my face is covered with shame. Spare a suppliant, O GOD." I am guilty; I have no excuse to allege; but I mourn.

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED: My son, "what iniquity hast thou found in Me, that thou art gone far from Me, and hast walked after vanity?"[2] Where are the benefits wherewith I have not loaded thee? Lo, for love of thee I gave Myself up to a painful death; "for thy sake, I have suffered reproof: shame hath covered My face."[3] To snatch thee from the eternal flames of hell, I became poor and bereft of all; I became a stranger unto My brethren, even an alien unto My mother's children.[4] I was covered with wounds, from My feet to My head; overwhelmed with sorrows, humiliations, wrongs, and all these I have borne for thee, My child, "because thy soul is precious in My sight;"[5] for thee, because I would save thee; for thee, because I love thee. O My son, how hast thou hitherto responded to so much love? Answer Me.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE: LORD, I say again, I have no excuse to plead; I can only groan, and cast myself with confidence at the feet of Thy mercy.

[1] Micah vi. 3.
[2] Jer. ii. 5.
[3] Ps. lxix. 7.
[4] Ps. lxix. 8.
[5] 1 Sam. xxvi. 21.

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED: Since I took thee out of nothing, and gave thee life, thou hast not ceased to displease Me, a thousand times thou hast done Me shameful dishonour by thy sins; I had graven upon thy soul the impress of My Divinity, and thou hast sought to efface it; I had set thereto the seal of My holiness, and thou hast stained it; I had overwhelmed thee with gifts, and thou hast despised them. "Do ye thus requite the LORD? Is not He thy FATHER that hath bought thee? hath He not made thee, and established thee? and kept thee as the apple of His eye?"[1] and yet thou forsakest and forgettest Me? Thou forsakest Me for a paltry pleasure. O My son, I appeal to thee; hast thou possessed happiness, so long as thou hast been unfaithful to My love? Hast thou tasted that sweet peace, which fills the heart of those who fervently serve Me? Do thou at length "know and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy GOD"[2] and return again to Me. Lo, I stretch forth My arms to thee; hasten unto Me: I will be thy FATHER, and thou once more My beloved son.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE: My LORD, Thou hast conquered: yea, Thou hast conquered; I surrender myself to Thee. I promise Thee I will be no more ungrateful; but, O LORD, graciously cease to reproach me with the sins of my past life, and vouchsafe to forgive me them. I will be penitent for them all the days of my life; I will try to love Thee with my whole heart. Amen.

My GOD, I love Thee, not because
I hope for heaven thereby,
Not because they who love Thee not
Must burn eternally.

[1] Deut. xxxii. 6, 10. [2] Jer. ii. 19.

Thou, O my JESUS, Thou didst me
Upon the Cross embrace,
For me didst bear the nails and spear
And manifold disgrace,

And griefs and torments numberless,
And sweat of agony,
E'en death itself, and all for one
Who was Thine enemy.

* * * * *

E'en so I love Thee, and will love,
And in Thy praise will sing,
Solely because Thou art my GOD
And my eternal King.

Practical Resolutions.

FREQUENT THOUGHTS OF THE MERCIES OF THE LORD TOWARDS US.

"I will mention the loving-kindness of the LORD, and the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD hath bestowed on us, according to His mercies, and according to the multitude of His loving-kindnesses."[1] "Praise the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me praise His holy Name. Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits."[2] Such, my dear Theotime, should be the sentiments of every Christian to whom gratitude is not a burden. But, alas, where are to be found those truly grateful souls, who know how to thank GOD for all the blessings wherewith He loads them? Where are they? O heaven! we should blush to prove ourselves ungrateful towards men, and with regard to GOD, we think not of Him. We ask Him with strong

[1] Isa. lxiii. 7. [2] Ps. ciii. 1, 2.

crying for gifts and favours, which we receive each day abundantly, but too often we have not the gratitude to say, "My GOD, I thank Thee." What conduct is this? O Theotime, keep thyself from ever falling into the sin of ingratitude towards our good Master, because this sin alone suffices to dry up all the sources of grace, as S. Bernard warns us in many places in his works. Remember frequently, on the contrary, all the general and special blessings thou hast received from GOD. Besides the gifts of creation, redemption, and preservation, what signal mercies has He not bestowed upon thee! Thou hast offended Him. Yet this loving FATHER has not dealt with thee after thine iniquities; He saw thy affliction, it moved Him, and He pitied thee. He forgives thee all thy sins, heals all thy wounds, has snatched thee from hell, and, because He is full of tenderness and compassion, has restored thee the robe of thy innocence.[1] Thou hadst dragged thy unhappy soul through the mire; thou hadst degraded and covered it with shameful stains; the devil has trampled it under foot, and immersed it daily more and more in the more impure mire; and lo, thy GOD has condescended to come Himself to lift it out. He has cherished it in His blood, enriched it with a thousand precious gifts, and loaded it with pledges of His love. O, what cause hast thou to exclaim with the Psalmist, "Who is like unto the LORD our GOD? He taketh up the simple out of the dust, and lifteth the poor out of the mire; that He may set him with the princes, even with the princes of His people;"[2] that is to say, in the midst of saints and angels. Compare thy former state when thou wast living in sin, with that in which GOD has,

[1] Ps. ciii. passim. [2] Ps. cxiii. 5, 6, 7.

through His mercy, placed thee to-day, and with sentiments of gratitude, say continually, "What reward shall I give unto the LORD, for all the benefits that He hath done unto me?"[1] I will always give thanks unto the LORD; His praise shall ever be in my mouth.[2] I will show forth Thy truth from one generation to another.[3] O blessed JESUS, suffer me not to be ungrateful; nor to deserve the reproach Thou once madest to Thy people the Jews; "Thou regardedst not My wonders, neither keptest My great goodness in remembrance."[4]

CHAPTER XXXIX.

OF HIS OWN WILL JESUS CHRIST GAVE HIMSELF TO DEATH FOR LOVE OF US.

"It pleased the LORD to bruise Him."—Isa. liii.

THE Incarnate Word, from the moment of His Conception, beheld the souls of all the children of Adam enter His Presence; and together with these, saw before His eyes the horrible picture of those sufferings which were to be the price of their redemption. Thus from the first moment of His existence in time, JESUS CHRIST saw, and perfectly knew the souls of all men who had already since the beginning of creation peopled the earth, as well as those of all succeeding generations to the end of the world. Consequently He likewise saw and knew

[1] Ps. cxvi. 11. [2] Ps. xxxiv. 1.
[3] Ps. lxxxix. 1. [4] Ps. cvi. 7.

mine, and beheld it covered with sins, plunged in fearful darkness, and bereft of all. That sight, instead of causing Him to reject me as an object of horror, moved His compassion, and for love of me He accepted from that time all the sufferings He afterwards endured throughout His life, and especially at His death. He had no personal interest urging Him to act thus, and take upon Him so many sufferings; the love which He had for my perishing soul alone constrained Him: love caused Him to be born in a stable; love caused Him to die upon a Cross. I was condemned to hell, and He offered Himself for my ransom! I was born under GOD's wrath, and He offered Himself to appease that wrath: I thought not of loving Him, I lived but to offend Him, and He first loved me, and offered Himself up to give me a striking token of His love, and to invite me to love Him. Shall I be insensible to so great a tenderness of my LORD? Since JESUS loves me so ardently, can I refuse to render Him that return which is just?

What then shall I render to the LORD? what shall I offer Him in exchange for all I have received from Him? He has offered up for me the most precious victim He possessed, which was Himself: it is meet that I in return should offer to Him the best of all I have, my whole being. And how? When GOD gives Himself wholly to me, shall I hesitate to give myself wholly to Him? O LORD, vouchsafe favourably to accept the offering I make to Thee of myself. I can offer Thee but two mites, my body and my soul; but give me grace to offer these gladly. The sacrifice of my body, by mortifications, sufferings, labours, and privations; the sacrifice of my soul by laying at Thy feet my self-will, my vain-glory, my pride, and all

else which is displeasing to Thee. I know, O my GOD! the sacrifice is difficult, painful, and hard for flesh and blood: but do Thou help me, and I will make it, entirely and without reserve, and for my whole life.

O holy JESUS, Who for love of me hast given Thyself up to sufferings and to death, I come to cast myself at Thy feet, to pray to Thee to receive me wholly, as a holocaust destined to be sacrificed to Thee. Accept my liberty, my memory, my intellect, my will, and all that I am. If I possess anything it is from Thee I hold it: therefore to Thee I return it, that Thou mayest dispose of it according to Thy good pleasure. Give me only Thy love and Thy grace, I shall be rich enough. O my GOD, what powerful motives have not I, a poor sinner, to love Thee with all my heart? "Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back;"[1] and forgotten them. And it is thus, that instead of punishing me for the evils I have multiplied against Thee, Thou hast multiplied Thy favours and mercies to win me one day to Thy love. Finish Thy work, and keep me faithful to Thee. Alas! Thou knowest my weakness: cause me henceforth to be wholly Thine, as Thou hast been wholly mine. Amen.

Practical Resolutions.

OF THE SPIRIT OF SELF-SACRIFICE FOR THE LOVE OF GOD.

Yesterday I spoke to thee of ingratitude, and I urged thee, my dear Theotime, to shun this odious vice, which

[1] Isa. xxxviii. 17.

GOD and men have in horror. Thou mayest this day prove to our LORD that thou knowest how to appreciate and acknowledge His benefits, in consenting to do for His glory what He has done for thy love. This kind Master, in order to snatch thee from Hell, offered Himself as a Victim to GOD His FATHER: do thou the same. Regard thyself henceforth as a victim destined to be sacrificed according to GOD's good pleasure. Be assured thou art no longer thine own, but wholly belonging to GOD. Therefore, when it pleases Him to send thee some cross, or humiliation, or sickness, submit, saying, "I am become His sacrifice, He may slay me." When thy superiors give thee from Him some order to which thou findest it hard to submit, when thou feelest thy own will rebel against the will of those who govern thee, hasten to call to thy succour this thought, "I belong not to myself; I am the sacrifice, therefore I will be slain." If murmurs arise in thy heart, and thou feel a strong repugnance thus to sacrifice thyself,—if thy pride draw itself up, and offer some resistance, then remember JESUS, Who sacrificed Himself for love of thee, and Who, like an innocent Lamb, suffered Himself to be slain without uttering a complaint. Finally, when thou shalt see death ready to strike thee, raise thine eyes to Heaven and say: "My GOD, I am a whole burnt-offering to Thee, a sacrifice of love: strike the last blow, and accomplish my sacrifice. I will be Thine throughout eternity, in order to love Thee, bless Thee, thank Thee for all Thy mercies towards me, and enjoy Thy gracious Presence."

CHAPTER XL.

JESUS CHRIST BECAME A CURSE FOR THE LOVE OF US, IN ORDER TO TAKE AWAY FROM US THE EVERLASTING CURSE WE HAD MERITED.

"GOD sending His own SON in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh."—Rom. viii. 3.

GOD hates sin with sovereign hatred; wheresoever He discovers it, He punishes it unsparingly, as His justice and holiness demanded. JESUS CHRIST being commissioned by His heavenly FATHER to redeem us, clothed Himself with flesh similar to the sinful flesh we bear; and though He had Himself no sin, nevertheless GOD made Him "a curse for us."[1] Yes, our Divine SAVIOUR, willing to remove from us the eternal curse which we had deserved, consented to be Himself a curse for us, by hanging on a Cross as a criminal and malefactor, abhorred by every one. O what love, blessed JESUS! Thou Who by Thy death hast delivered me from the bondage of original sin, and of the sins I have committed since my baptism, change, I beseech Thee, these wretched chains, which have so long kept me under the empire and slavery of Satan, into chains of gold, binding me closely to Thee by Thy holy love. I beseech Thee make the power of Thy grace and the efficacy of Thy merits to shine forth to render me holy, instead of what I am, a miserable sinner.

It was on account of our sins that our LORD became a curse, this is an article of faith. What thoughts then should I have of an evil which GOD alone could destroy

[1] Gal. iii. 13.

at such a price? It is an evil, the greatest and most terrible of all evils. Oh! how then should I dread it! how carefully avoid it! with what vigilance should I guard against its entrance to establish its kingdom in my soul.[1] Alas! there was a time when this cursed sin held me under its sway: but I have been delivered from its shameful bondage by the grace of baptism: my soul has been washed in the blood of JESUS, and this loving Master has vouchsafed to restore it pure and beautiful in His sight. O my GOD, suffer me not again miserably to defile it by fresh sins: O favourably in mercy suffer it not! Thou hast restored me Thy grace, suffer me not to be so wretched as to lose it a second time! What would become of me without it?

Without Thy grace I must have been in hell! It is most true that long since I have deserved to be there, crushed beneath the weight of Thy eternal curse. But I hope that, through Thy mercy, and by the glory of Thy agonising death, such will not be my lot. From henceforth I give myself to Thy perfect service. From henceforth I will that my heart love nothing but Thee. Thee, O my GOD! I will love Thee for Thyself, my friends in Thee, my enemies for Thee. O reign Thou over my whole soul; cause it from henceforth to obey Thee only, to seek Thee only, to sigh for Thee alone! O quit my heart, ye earthly affections, which centre not in GOD, and are not for Him; and thou, O flame of Divine love, come into me! Come and take possession of my heart. In gratitude I dedicate myself to Thee, O my GOD, Who art my treasure and my all. Amen.

[1] Rom. vi. 12.

Practical Resolutions.

OF CHASTITY.

Be it permitted me, my dear Theotime, to converse with thee to-day of the fairest and most precious of virtues; of that virtue which makes man resemble GOD Himself; of that virtue, compared with which all riches, treasures, and honours are nothing:[1] I mean chastity. It is so beautiful a virtue, that its enemies are constrained to admire it. Our LORD greatly prized it; and the more a soul is pure and chaste, the more pleased He is to heap upon it His choicest gifts. But as much as this virtue is the most precious, so is it the most difficult to preserve. The flesh and the devil unite their endeavours to cause us to lose it, and it is not easy to come forth victorious from so terrible a strife. Nevertheless, O Theotime, trust in GOD: He knows our weakness, and the clay from whence we are formed; and He forsakes not His children in the midst of danger. Ask frequently of JESUS the gift of chastity, because Heaven only can bestow upon thee so precious a gift;[2] and then be faithful to what I am about to tell thee, in order not to fall into the power of thine enemy.

1st. *Fly occasions of sin.* For in the conflicts of the flesh, victory belongs to the most timid; that is, to those who avoid occasions of sin. If thou expose thyself thereto, thou wilt fall.[3]

"How many unhappy ones," says S. Jerome, "have, when dying, fallen into the mire of impurity, because of the presumption with which they thought themselves sure

[1] Ecclus. xxvi. 15. [2] Wisd. viii. 21. [3] Ecclus. iii. 26.

of the victory." Whatever experience thou mayest have of thy own faithfulness hitherto, be ever watchful, and never think thyself secure for the future.

2ndly. *Guard all thy senses.* Suffer not thine eyes to rest upon dangerous objects: never pronounce a word which can, however slightly, wound a chaste ear.

3rdly. *Fly idleness.* The HOLY SPIRIT teaches us that it leads to a greater number of sins.[1] It was the cause of all the crimes of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah;[2] and still makes, from day to day, a multitude of victims. Then fly from idleness, and let the devil find thee always busy. Forget not that many there are who, having been holy in their labours, have through idleness unhappily been lost; and that for one devil who tempts an occupied person, a hundred tempt and worry one who is idle. I repeat, therefore, *fly idleness.*

4thly. *Mortify thyself.* Self-mortification is the salt that preserves all other virtues, but especially that of chastity, which cannot long live without it. Avoid all excess in eating and drinking; for good cheer and abundance of viands, and delicacy of wines, are the greatest enemies to chastity. Either never take pure wine, or else let it be in a very small quantity, and rarely; for he who drinks wine to excess will assuredly be a prey to tumultuous passions, and will with difficulty be able to preserve chastity.

5thly. *Be humble.* Humility is the guardian of chastity, as pride is the token of a coming fall. Even so, my dear Theotime, GOD often punishes the proud, by suffering them to fall into the turpitude of some sin of impurity. Therefore never cherish too good an opinion of thyself,

[1] Ecclus. xxxiii. 27. Ezek. xvi. 49.

thy talents, or thy merits, for fear of drawing upon thyself the anger of GOD; and let that lesson of S. Bernard be unceasingly present to thy mind, "We can only obtain and preserve chastity by means of humility."

6thly. *Be much in prayer.* Amid the conflicts of the flesh with the spirit, it is only GOD Who can sustain our weakness, and give us victory. Therefore, as soon as thou beginnest to feel the first assaults of thine enemy, hasten to JESUS, and say to Him, "Gracious LORD, come speedily to my help, or I perish." Make the sign of the Cross on thy heart, and say, "My GOD, I had rather die than consent to that bad thought, that evil desire: have pity on me." . . . After the temptation say, "O JESUS! blessed object of my love, be Thou for ever praised, that Thou hast pleased to deliver me from this temptation, and hast not left me to my own weakness. Suffer me not to be ever unhappy enough, through sin, to be separated from Thee."

CHAPTER XLI.

HOW MUCH THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST FOR US LAYS US UNDER OBLIGATION TO LOVE HIM.

"The love of CHRIST constraineth us."—2 Cor. v. 14.

"NOTHING," says S. Francis de Sales, "so constrains the heart of man as love. If a man know that another loves him, whoever he be, he feels constrained to return him love for love. If a simple peasant be loved by a great lord, he feels the more constrained to this: if by

a mighty monarch, how much more powerfully still! Therefore, does not the knowledge that JESUS CHRIST our GOD so loved us as to die on the Cross for us, act with constraining power upon our hearts, to draw from them our love with equal force and sweetness?" Our LORD JESUS CHRIST loves us; and O, who could doubt this after all the proofs of tenderness which He has given us? Yes, He loves us, and wills that we should love Him. For this He became man, and died upon the Cross; for this He instituted the Sacrament of the Eucharist. He gave Himself to us, wholly and unreservedly. A pious author says, "His Incarnation and Advent into this world were for us; His Birth in a stable, His manger-cradle, were for us; His exposure to the inclemency of the air, His endurance of the cold, His sufferings from the inconveniences of poverty, His trembling, and His weeping, were all for us. In taking on Him a body, He did it in order to suffer and be sacrificed for us; His heart is to love us; in fact, every movement of His soul, every desire of His heart, every thought of His mind, is for us, and is ours. His life is ours; His sacred humanity, with all His virtues and merits, is ours. What do I say? His divinity itself, with all its perfection, is ours. He has given us all in the Sacrament of His love, in such a way, that it is not possible for Him to give us more: for what can He give greater and more precious than Himself? Yes. JESUS, constrained by the immense love He bears us, gave Himself wholly to us: He was exhausted for us; He employed Himself entirely in our service; and it is a truth when we say, that nothing else in the world is so perfectly, universally, and solely ours, as JESUS CHRIST."

Blessed JESUS! SAVIOUR of my soul! only object of my longing love, help Thy servant. I cry to Thee, I call upon Thee from the depth of my heart. Enter thereinto, for I offer it to Thee wholly; come to establish Thine abode, and shed therein Thy holy love. O inexhaustible source of sweetness, love, and goodness, blessed and dear object of all my desires, is there aught to be compared with Thy Divine beauty? The sweetest honey, the most delicious nectar, are not comparable to Thy sweetness! Snow and purest milk approach not to Thy purity! All earthly treasures, gold, silver, precious stones, honours, and pleasures themselves, could not move me after tasting Thy delights. No, my GOD! I will have none but Thee: I will belong to Thee for ever: I will be Thy child throughout eternity! O SAVIOUR JESUS! be Thou ever a SAVIOUR unto me!

Since our LORD JESUS CHRIST gave Himself entirely to us, it is most just that we in our turn should give up ourselves unreservedly to Him. Should it cost us great toil, painful sacrifices, these must not hinder us: let us belong wholly to GOD, for this is justice. Should it occasion the loss of our goods, of our repose, of our reputation, neither must this hinder us: let us belong wholly to GOD; it is just. Were it, in short, to cost us all we hold dearest on earth, nay, our very life, oh, let nothing hinder us: let us belong wholly to GOD, for it is most just. And how then can we hesitate so long in resolving to return to GOD love for love? Would it then be so great an affliction to belong wholly to JESUS? Alas! the greatest, the most fearful of all afflictions, is not to belong to Him!

Yet, O gracious JESUS, this affliction has been too long

mine. Oh how many years have I spent away from Thee! Alas! I was blind then, and knew not what Thou hadst done for love of me. My SAVIOUR, do Thou bring constantly to my remembrance the sufferings Thou hast endured, to prove to me Thy loving-kindness. Cause their remembrance to be never effaced from my mind, that I may understand how Thou hast loved me. If in times past I have led a life thus guilty and irregular, it is that I remembered not, O JESUS, the love Thou hast had for me. I knew, however, the deep displeasure I caused Thee by my sins, but alas! this knowledge hindered me not from committing many of these. I should not assuredly have courage to intreat Thy forgiveness, but for the knowledge that Thou hast died to give it me. Yea, Thou diedst upon the Cross because Thou soughtest my love. And yet I, O JESUS! desire Thine with so much indifference. Give me grace to long for it now more than all the possessions of this world. O my only Sovereign Treasure! Thou art my hope, Thou knowest how weak I am: succour me, O LORD JESUS!

We ought to give ourselves unreservedly to GOD, withholding nothing from Him, because whatever we give Him, it is always very little, so little as to be accounted nothing. I toil, I mortify myself, I take up my cross, I give my very life for the love of GOD! but what after all is this, when I compare the greatness of GOD with my own vileness? what great service can nothingness render to the Being Who is perfection? I am nothing, and can do nothing of myself: what I possess I hold from GOD. And with what claim should I pretend to withhold from Him what is His own? In requiring from me my whole heart, He requires only what is His: then what great

merit have I if I give it to Him? Besides, whatever I can do for the love of GOD is so paltry, so imperfect, that it would be a shame to take away the least portion therefrom, especially when I reflect upon all He Himself has done and still does for me. And how! JESUS loves me as much as it is possible to Him to love, and would I love Him not, with all my strength! Great GOD, remove from me such ingratitude! Oh! if I cannot give Thee much in thankfulness for all Thy benefits, at least enable me to give Thee unreservedly what little I possess.

LORD JESUS! who knowest so perfectly all that is most hidden in heaven and earth, Thou knowest that Thou art to me infinitely more dear than heaven and earth, and a thousand times sweeter than all they contain. Thou knowest that I will be Thine, that I have given myself to Thee, reserving nothing. My heart is no longer my own: I have made it an offering to Thee: it is Thine: make it worthy of Thee! Heal all its infirmities, and suffer it not to fall away again. O JESUS, give me grace to renew my self-oblation every day of my life, and to say throughout eternity, "I belong to JESUS! I am His! I am His lowly servant! Yes, I belong to the LORD JESUS, and through His grace, in which I trust, and which will not fail me, I shall be ever His." Amen.

Practical Resolutions.

OF THE PERFECT AMENDMENT OF OURSELVES.

Recollect thyself seriously to-day, my dear Theotime, and ask thyself if indeed thy conscience bears thee this

consoling testimony, that thou belongest wholly to GOD. Examine into all which thou doest to please Him, and how thou doest it. Review all thine actions, and see if thou hast good ground for believing that JESUS is satisfied therewith. With what reverence, with what attention, prayest thou? Art thou regular in thy daily prayers? are thy intentions always upright, pure, and holy? art thou very exact in all the duties of thy station? what progress hast thou made in humility, and in obedience to thy superior or thy director? how strivest thou against thy passions, especially thy ruling passions? art thou persevering in the practice of self-examination? fliest thou carefully from the world and its pleasures? art thou not careless in thy preparation for thy religious duties? dost thou not carry thy unfaithfulness to the pass of forsaking frequent Communion, for fear of its obliging thee to a stricter watchfulness over self? O Theotime! here are points for meditation, and perhaps thou wilt find herein causes for humiliation. What if I speak of the many sarcasms, the idle words, and above all the slanders, of which perhaps thou art sometimes guilty? O form this day the courageous resolution of amending thyself: begin by correcting such and such a fault, such as continually criticizing thy neighbour, evil speaking, &c. Pray to our LORD to help thee, and ask His grace to be entirely His, whatever it may cost thee.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE LIFTING UP OF THE HEART TO JESUS CHRIST, IN SUPPLICATION TO BE DRAWN TO HIMSELF BY THE BLESSEDNESS OF HIS LOVE.

"And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me."—S. John xii. 32.

THESE are Thy words, O Divine SAVIOUR! Thou didst speak them while on earth in Thy humanity. Thou didst then tell us that when Thou shouldst be raised upon the Cross, Thou wouldst draw to Thyself the hearts of all men. Thou art Truth infallible: and I cannot doubt the accomplishment of Thy words: yet wherefore has my unhappy heart been for so many years far from Thee? It is my own grievous fault: for how many times hast Thou not called me to Thy service, and have I not refused to hear Thy voice? how many times hast Thou not pardoned my offences? how many times hast Thou not affectionately warned me, by the remorse of my conscience, to displease Thee no more? And notwithstanding so many mercies, how often have I not returned to my sins? O my LORD JESUS! cast me not away from Thy Presence, for away from Thee I should be doomed to curse all the gifts Thou hast lavished upon me. Yes, all these gifts and inward enlightenments which Thou hast granted me, all the tender invitations to give myself up to Thee, which Thou hast held out to me, Thy long-suffering in bearing with me, the Blood Thou hast shed to save me, all these would be terrible and bitter, if in the end I be found wanting. I feel, O my GOD, that Thou art still this day calling me to

Thyself even as though I had never offended Thee, and Thou sayest to me, "Thou shalt love the LORD thy GOD with all thy heart." Since Thou commandest it, O LORD, I will strive to do so with all my heart. In pity, O my crucified LORD! suffer me not for an instant to cease from obeying this Thy Law. Remind me always of the death Thou didst suffer for me; remind me of all the tokens of Thy loving-kindness, and cause their remembrance to kindle me more and more with the desire to serve Thee and be consumed for Thee, Who becamest a Sacrifice for me.

"When I shall be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto Me." LORD JESUS! I beseech Thee, fulfil this day Thy promise, and draw me to Thyself. O Thou most Beloved Spouse of my soul! JESUS CHRIST, pure object of my love! LORD of all creation! O that I had the wings of true liberty, that I might flee away and rest in Thee. O when shall it be fully granted me to consider in quietness of mind, and taste and see how gracious Thou art, my LORD GOD? When shall I fully gather up myself unto Thee, that by reason of my love to Thee, I may not feel myself, but Thee alone, above sense and measure, in a manner not known to every one? But now I can only groan, and bear my misery with pain; for in this valley of tears I meet with many sorrows which trouble me, and afflict and overcloud me. These often weary and delay me: they take possession of me: they impede me: and depriving me of free access to Thee, rob me of those Divine welcomings which the spirits in heaven for ever and without hindrance enjoy. O let my sighs move Thee, and my earthly desolation!

O JESU, Thou brightness of eternal glory! Thou com-

fort of the pilgrim soul! My lips are dumb before Thee, and my very silence speaketh unto Thee. How long doth my LORD delay His coming! Let Him come to a poor sinner who belongs to Him; let Him stretch forth His hand to raise up an unhappy one who is plunged in agony. Come, O come! for all my days and hours are consumed in sadness, because Thou art my only joy, and canst alone fill the void of my heart. I am oppressed by misery, and am as a prisoner loaded with fetters, until Thou, reviving me by the light of Thy Presence, shalt grant me liberty, and cast upon me a look of love.

Let others seek, instead of Thee, whatsoever they list; but for me, nothing pleases me, and nothing will ever satisfy me, but Thou, O my GOD, my hope, my everlasting salvation! O draw me ever to Thee more and more. Alas, my soul! it has tasted the pleasures of this world, and found them bitterness: glory and honour weary without satisfying it: riches leave it void and restless; the whole world cannot satisfy it! it ever desires something greater and better. Thou only, O LORD my GOD, canst fulfil its desires. Draw it then to Thyself for ever. Amen.

Practical Resolutions.

OF EJACULATORY PRAYERS.

There are two exercises well known to pious souls, with which, my dear Theotime, I would urge thee to become familiar: the first is "*spiritual communion*," of which I will speak in the next chapter; and the other is the habit of frequently lifting up thy heart to GOD, in what are called "*ejaculatory prayers*." It is certain that few prac-

tices contribute so much as these two to unite a soul to GOD, and render it habitually recollected. Begin by accustoming thyself to feel GOD always present with thee, and to converse with Him intimately, as with thy dearest friend. Open thy heart to Him, speak to Him of all thy trifling sadnesses, of thy joys and fears. Thou hast no need for that to seek Him afar off, since He is always beside thee. If thou art at work, or walking, or sitting still, He leaves thee not for a moment; if thou art asleep, He remains beside thee, so to speak, close to thy pillow, in order the better to watch over thee. Say, then, to Him frequently, "O my GOD, I love Thee with my whole heart." Learn to take advantage of everything which may raise thy soul towards this loving FATHER, and excite thee to love Him. When, for instance, thou seest a beautiful country, or a charming locality, say, "O my GOD, how beautiful are Thy works!" or, "LORD, if the works of Thy Hand are thus lovely, what must Thou be Thyself!" At sight of a magnificent palace, say, "Alas! it is rarely in palaces such as these that true happiness is found. It is found only in the hearts of those who love Thee, O GOD;" or else, "What are these buildings, dazzling with gold and gems, in comparison with heaven? O my GOD, give me Thy paradise!" When riches, dignities, and honours are talked of in thy presence, say, "O my GOD, Thou alone sufficest me; Thou art all my possession and glory." If thou seest a poor sinner who is offending GOD, say, "O JESUS, have pity on that man!" Then returning to look into thyself, say, "Woe is me: I should be even worse than he is, if Thou wert to leave me to my own weakness. Be Thy mercy for ever praised." When any misfortune occurs to thee, or any-

thing distresses thee, say, "Gracious JESUS! vouchsafe to sympathise in my sorrow, and console me: Thou seest what I suffer." Likewise when thou art in any joy, call upon our LORD to be with thee in it. I could, my dear Theotime, multiply these examples almost endlessly; but if thou lovest thy LORD, thou wilt not require suggestions as to what thou shouldst say to Him; thine own heart will inspire thee. But it is especially in times when thou hast committed any sin, that thou shouldst lift up thy heart towards GOD, in order to avoid the uneasiness and disquietude, which never proceed but from hell. Cast thyself, then, merely at the Feet of thy SAVIOUR; confess to Him thy sin, with the same simplicity as that wherewith a little child confesses a fault to its mother, and say to Him, "O loving LORD! O my best Friend! behold what I am capable of: I promise Thee to be faithful, and withal I offend Thee every moment. O forgive me yet once more this sin, for I repent, and I love Thee; and come Thou to my aid, that for the future I may no more displease Thee." After this short prayer, maintain thyself in peace, as though thou hadst not sinned.[1] Wert thou to fall again into the same sin a hundred times as often repeat the same prayer: humble thyself, arise, and

[1] This must not be taken as tending to teach any laxity on the subject of the necessity of deep humiliation and penitence for sin. The chapter would seem to refer to the frailties and occasional backslidings from the force of an enfeebled nature, which are liable even to the holiest persons, according to the words, "The just man falleth seven times a day." If taken with regard to deeper sin, it would teach that even then we are not to forget that the love of GOD is a great element in true contrition, and that even abased and crippled as the sinner is, he is not to lose his hope or confidence in GOD.—ED.

say always, "O my JESUS, notwithstanding my incessant falls, I will not cease to love Thee, and to trust in Thee; for, O my GOD, I love Thee!"

CHAPTER XLIII.

JESUS THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

"I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep."—S. John x. 11.

"YES," exclaims S. Augustine, "JESUS is truly the Good Shepherd, for He loves His sheep more than Himself, and gave Himself up to death to recall us therefrom." For the sheep of His pasture He came down from the splendour of His glory; for them He clothed Himself with the tattered vesture of our humanity, and condemned Himself to a hard laborious life, full of sufferings; for them He exhausted all the treasures of His tenderness; and for them at last He died upon a Cross.

JESUS is the Good Shepherd: His every moment, His every sigh, all His labours, His whole life, His entire Self, were dedicated to the happiness of His sheep. He was GOD, and He did all that Infinite Power could do to show forth His love to them.

JESUS is the Good Shepherd: behold how His bowels of compassion are moved towards His poor wandering and dispersed sheep of the house of Israel. For love of them He rests not, day or night. For love of them He goes through cities, hamlets, towns, deserts, in order to find some of His sheep; He prays, He moans, He asks with

strong crying for their salvation, and finally gives His own life to obtain it. Behold Him on the Cross; He is about to expire thereon, amidst agonising pains, and yet there His love tears away from the devil one of those sheep, which that roaring lion of hell was about to devour.[1] Behold Him descend again at another time from heaven, to bring back to the fold another wandering sheep.[2] See Him, the Good Shepherd, by the side of each one of us, saying to us unceasingly, "My child, fly not from Me: lo! I open Mine arms unto thee: come, and I will carry thee into rich pasturage. Come, and I will restore thee My love and favour."

JESUS is the Good Shepherd; "He knows His sheep, and His sheep know Him."[3] O how sweet it is to abide with this Shepherd, so full of love for His sheep! O how happy is that soul which quits Him not for a moment! It receives at His hand most sweet kindnesses and most precious gifts. Now a soul abides continually close to JESUS, which endeavours to live in the deepest recollection, in humility, and contrition. Recollection is obtained by prayer, and by the most exact and scrupulous faithfulness to our every duty. Humility is acquired by the remembrance of our own wretchedness and incapability of good, and above all by voluntary humiliations; finally, contrition is entertained in the soul by the thought of the love of GOD for us, and of our sins committed against Him.

JESUS is the Good Shepherd; His eyes are always on His sheep. If one stray, He seeks it in every place, pursues it with eager solicitude, and takes no rest till He has found it, and brought it back to the fold. O blessed

[1] S. Luke xxiii. 43. [2] Acts ix. 5. [3] S. John x. 14.

JESUS! with what security may I not cry out to all creatures, that Thou art the Good Shepherd, I having realised, in a manner so ineffable, Thy tenderness. Woe is me! I have erred and strayed like a lost sheep;[1] I have wandered on more and more; I have yielded to all the ill-regulated desires of my heart; I have left the path of innocence to follow that of sin; "I have wearied myself in the way of destruction."[2] Nevertheless, O JESUS, Thou didst not forsake me. I wandered still further and further from Thee, and Thou didst not lose sight of me; all my steps, all my proceedings, were so many falls into new abysses. I gave myself without measure to my passions, and Thou maintainedst a deep silence. *O tortuosas vias!* Woe is me, to have thought that in forsaking my GOD, I could find anything better than Him! Alas! I have unhappily proved, by too long experience, the sorrows and agonies which torture the ungrateful heart which seeks rest out of Thee, O blessed JESUS. O how many years have I spent without loving Thee! How many years have I lost in the service of the devil, of the world, and of my passions! How many years have I toiled in trampling under foot the marks of Thy love, and in being rebellious to Thy inspirations! As for Thee, O my GOD, Thou wast ever patient with me; my miseries increased, and Thou insensibly drewest nearer to me. Thy loving hand advanced, unperceived by me, to draw me forth from the mire and purify me. O JESUS, Good Shepherd, what acts of thanksgiving shall I render unto Thee for so much love?

JESUS is the Good Shepherd, and loves His sheep, even to the nourishing them with His own Body, and His own

[1] Ps. cxix. 176. [2] Isa. liii. 6; Wisd. v. 7.

Blood. O where is the shepherd who has ever thus given himself up for his flock? There is but JESUS Who has ever been capable of such a deed of exceeding love. Many mothers refuse to nourish their own children, and give them to be suckled by strangers; but it is not so with our loving Redeemer: not satisfied with giving His life and merits for us, He wills likewise to become our food.

LORD JESUS! how can it be that I should ever have forsaken so tender a Master, and one full of love? O what might have been my happiness, had I, as a faithful sheep, remained always beside Thee. But alas, the evil is done; I have been ungrateful, and estranged myself from my best Friend. Kind Friend, have compassion on me; behold, I return to Thee, all covered with the wounds I have received, and ashamed of my flight. I beseech Thee, reject me not. Remember, O my beloved SAVIOUR, that I am one of those poor sheep for whom Thou gavest Thy life. Cast upon me one of those looks of kindness and mercy which once from the height of Thy Cross Thou didst cast upon surrounding sinners, while for my salvation Thou wast yielding up Thy last sigh. Yea, my JESUS, grant to me one of those gracious looks: change me, by making me holier, and save me. And art Thou not that Shepherd, full of love, Who, having a hundred sheep, if He lose one of them,[1] leaveth the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and goeth after that which is lost, until He find it? And when Thou hast found it, dost Thou not lay it on Thy shoulders, rejoicing, and call together Thy friends and neighbours, even the saints and angels, and say to them, "Rejoice with Me, for I have found My sheep which was lost?" Yes, my LORD, it is

[1] S. Luke xv. 4, 7.

Thou, it is Thyself, and I am that poor lost sheep. Lo, I am at Thy feet, and I wait to be taken into Thine arms, to be carried back to the fold. Let not heaven be wanting of the joy which shall be therein, when Thou shalt return thither, bearing a poor sinner whom Thou shalt have made a saint. Receive me too into the number of Thy cherished sheep.

O, if through my own fault Thou wast not able to find me all the time that Thou soughtest for me with so much love, yet take me now as I fall at Thy feet, and bind me closely to Thyself, that I may return no more to my own ruin. Thy love must be the cord which holds me bound to Thee; for if Thou restrain me not by that sweet chain, I shall again stray from Thee. O LORD, it was not Thy doing, that I remained not always united to Thee, by the bands of Thy holy love. I ungratefully have always wandered from Thee afar off. Now I implore Thee, by that infinite mercy which caused Thee to come down on earth to seek me, attach me to Thyself, by a double band of love, in order that Thou mayest never more lose me, nor I Thee. My beloved Redeemer, I will be separated from Thee no more. I renounce all the good things and pleasures of this world, and I offer myself up to suffer every degree of pain, and every kind of death, provided I may live and die in close union with Thee. Amen.

Practical Resolutions.

OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNION.

I promised, in the preceding Chapter, to treat of Spiritual Communion, and I will now do so. Thou must

know, my dear Theotime, that it has been held by some that a person may communicate in three different ways, the first of which is only sacramental, the second only spiritual, and the third sacramental and spiritual in one. We speak not now of the first way, which is that in which such persons communicate who do so while in a state of mortal sin, as did the traitor Judas; nor yet of the third, which is the way of all those who receive the Body and Blood of JESUS CHRIST, in a state of grace; but simply of the second, which "consists in an ardent desire to be nourished with that heavenly bread, with a lively faith, which works by love, and which causes us to participate in the fruits and graces of the sacrament." It is therefore according to this doctrine, that those who cannot actually receive the Holy Eucharist, may receive it spiritually, by making acts of lively faith, of fervent love, and of ardent desire to unite themselves to the Sovereign Good: it is thus they put themselves into a state to participate in the effects of this Divine Sacrament.[1]

Now, be well assured that this Spiritual Communion, so neglected by the Christians of our day, is nevertheless a real treasure, which fills the soul with an infinity of blessings; and which, according to several authors, is so beneficial, that it may bring the same graces, and even greater ones, than Sacramental Communion; for though Sacramental Communion be in its nature of great effect, since being a sacrament, it works by virtue of itself; nevertheless, a soul thirsting for perfection, may communi-

[1] This may be said to be what is meant by the third rubric at the end of the Service of the Communion of the Sick in the English Prayer Book, "But if a man, either by reason of extremity of sickness," &c.—ED.

cate spiritually with so much humility, love and devotion, as to draw down a greater grace, than that derived by a soul which communicates sacramentally, but with less fervour and preparation. Could it be, that so many benefits should make no impression upon thee? What excuse canst thou for the future urge, if thou neglect a practice so holy and useful? Form the resolution to use it frequently, and observe further, that spiritual communion has this advantage over Sacramental Communion; that the latter can be only partaken of once in the day, whereas the former may be performed at all hours of the day: morning, evening, noon, or night, in church, or in thy chamber. In a word, as many times as thou shalt practise what I have here prescribed to thee, so many times thou wilt have performed spiritual communion, and enriched thy soul with favours, merits, and every kind of blessing. How many souls there are who, by this voluntary exercise, frequently repeated during the day, have attained to a great holiness.

CHAPTER XLIV.

Of the Love of God, and the chief means whereby to acquire it.

"We love Him, because He first loved us."—1 S. John iv. 19.

God loves us; we can no longer doubt thereof, after all He has done for us. He loves us with the greatest tenderness, and as though we were necessary to His happiness. He loves us in spite of our continual rebellion

against His will, our ingratitude, and our wretchedness. He loves us, and will be loved by us. He says to each one individually,[1] "My son, I have created, and redeemed thee, and loaded thee with blessings; give Me thy heart; I require of thee but one thing; it is that thou love Me." But not satisfied with engaging us to love Him by the multitude of His blessings; not satisfied with inviting us by words of sweetness, He gives us a direct command to do so. Thou shalt love the LORD thy GOD with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength.[2] O my GOD, what then am I to Thee, and in what am I worthy, that Thou shouldst command me to love Thee? Yet Thou commandest it; if I refuse, Thine anger is kindled against me, and Thou threatenest me with a terrible punishment, as if, alas! it were not punishment enough not to love Thee.

Happy, O infinitely happy is that soul which can say with truth, "I love my GOD, He is mine, and I am His." O happy, supremely happy, that soul which possesses the treasure of GOD's love, compared with which in price, all the treasures of a hundred millions of worlds, are nothing. Let him, who as yet possesses it not, put forth all his strength to acquire it; and let him who possesses it, give his whole care to preserve and increase it. Now these are the best and most useful means for attaining these two desirable ends.

1st. The first means, is by disengaging ourselves from earthly affections; for the love of GOD cannot find room in a heart which is full of earthly things. If then we desire to have our heart filled with Divine love, we should strive to empty it of all earthly objects, because the more

[1] Prov. xxiii. 26; Deut. x. 12. [2] Deut. vi. 5.

we love creatures, the less we love the Creator. Let us imitate the beautiful example of S. Paul, who counted all things "but dung, that he might win CHRIST."[1] Let us supplicate the HOLY SPIRIT to inflame us with His pure love, that we likewise may despise and regard as vanity, dung and mire, the riches, honours, and dignities of this earth, for which the majority of men lose themselves miserably.

From the time a Christian has received into his heart the precious consignment of the love of GOD, he attaches no more importance to what the world esteems. For him the love of GOD is everything: and in the language of Holy Scripture, "if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned."[2] The prize of the love of his GOD, appears to him infinitely above every created object. O JESUS, my SAVIOUR, I beseech Thee put into my heart a love for Thee, so pure and earnest, and devoted, that nothing in the world may be able to please me, but Thou alone. Give me grace to comprehend, that I am on earth only to love Thee; and that no creature must possess that heart which Thou hast created for Thyself alone. Give me grace to realise how gracious Thou art, O loving JESUS; then shall I love Thee with my whole soul.

A Christian who loves GOD truly, does all in his power to love no other but Him. He knows that in the language of Holy Scripture, He is a jealous GOD;[3] that He cannot endure a rival in a heart which loves Him: that He will possess that heart entirely; and he applies himself to tear up from his soul, the first roots of any affection which is not for, or in GOD. But some will perhaps

[1] Phil. iii. 8. [2] Cant. viii. 7. [3] Exod. xx. 5; xxxiv. 14.

urge in objection, Does not GOD require too much, in exacting that a soul should love nothing but Him? "Nay," replies S. Bonaventure, "for He Who in Himself is goodness, and infinite love, a GOD worthy of the same, may indeed justly require to be the one only Object of love, in a heart which He has created, but to be loved therein; He may indeed require to be exclusively loved in this heart, since it is in order to obtain such love, that He did everything for it, and as S. Bernard expresses it 'expended' Himself entirely for it."

No, my GOD; Thou requirest not too much from me in demanding my whole heart. I give it Thee, unreservedly and for ever: vouchsafe to accept favourably the homage thereof. Alas! wherefore can I only offer Thee a heart thus hard, insensible, wanting in everything and wretched? Make it worthy of Thee, since now it belongs to Thee: adorn it inwardly with some of thy choicest graces, nay, rather come Thyself and fix Thine abode therein. Yes, O blessed JESUS! come, this frail heart waits for Thee; sighs for Thy Presence; wills only Thy love, because the love of creatures has never been able to satisfy it.

Happy the soul which has reached such a degree of love to GOD, that it can find repose in nothing which is not GOD! If we will attain to it, we must beware of setting our affections upon creatures, lest they should rob GOD of a portion of that love which He will possess entirely. Now, be it that these affections are virtuous, such as those we bear towards our relations and friends, we must heed what a good man says: "As much love as we give to the creature, so much we take from GOD." When therefore any creature seeks to enter within our

heart to take possession thereof, we must absolutely deny it entrance; and to do this, let us turn to JESUS CHRIST, and say to Him, "O my JESUS! Thou alone art sufficient to me: I will love Thee only:[1] O my GOD, Thou shalt be the only Sovereign of my heart." O how happy is he who has attained the power of detaching himself from all creatures! Let us beseech the LORD to give us the gift of His pure love, because as S. Francis de Sales expresses it, "the pure love of GOD burns up within us all that is not GOD, and changes everything into Himself." Let us pray Him to purify our hearts from every inordinate creature attachment, that we may fly into His bosom, and there rest. O how many souls are there rich in virtues and graces, who from not having the resolution to give up such and such an inordinate earthly affection, cannot attain to the Divine union; whilst by one determined heavenward movement they might burst the thread which keeps them back, tied to this earth! They would thus gain infinite treasures of precious graces, because GOD would then communicate Himself entirely to them. Alas! I am perhaps myself of the number of these unhappy souls! "O my GOD, who will give me the wings of a dove?" who will give me a pure heart, entirely disengaged from every earthly affection, "that I may flee to Thy bosom, and there be sweetly and peacefully at rest?" My JESUS, enable me to detach myself from all: I will, I desire it so to be. O come to my aid: yea, I prefer Thee to all things, to health, riches, dignities, honours, praise, science, consolation, and even to the favours and benefits I might receive from Thee. I choose Thee before all which is not Thee, O my GOD! All that

[1] Ps. lxxiii. 26.

Thou couldst give me would not satisfy me, without Thyself, O GOD of my heart! it is Thyself only I desire, and nothing more. Enlighten me, that I may know what Thou willest I should cast out of my heart; and give me the strength to fulfil Thy will, for I will obey Thee in all things. Come, O my JESUS, come into my soul: come and take entire possession of it throughout time and eternity.

2ndly. The second means whereby to arrive at the perfect love of GOD is to be conformed in all things to His Divine will. A perfect love of GOD can only will what GOD wills. Many say with their lips that they are quite resigned to the LORD's will, but if something happen to cross them, or some physical uneasiness disturb them, they cannot maintain themselves in peace. It is not thus that souls act who are truly submissive. They say: "This or that is pleasing to, or has pleased the object of my love;" and immediately they are in peace. These souls are not ignorant that all which happens on earth is commanded or permitted by GOD. Thus, whatever happens they humbly bow the head, and abide satisfied with whatsoever the LORD wills to allot them.

A devout author teaches us, "that all the intention of one who prays should be to conform himself to the will of GOD, in doing which consists the highest state of perfection." In order to this he should be ever repeating to GOD the prayer of David, "Teach me to do Thy will."[1] The most perfect act of love a soul can make is that which S. Paul made at the moment of his conversion, when he said, "LORD, what wilt Thou have me to do?"[2] This act has more value than a thousand fasts and auste-

[1] Ps. cxliii. 10. [2] Acts ix. 4.

rities. To do the will of GOD should be the aim of all our works, desires, and prayers.

Let us then intreat the gift of grace to fulfil always the will of GOD; and when things happen to us contrary to our inclinations or our self-love, let us take advantage of so good an opportunity for our pleasing the LORD GOD by an act of resignation: and let us form the holy habit of repeating the words which JESUS Himself taught us by His example, "LORD, as is Thy will, such shall be mine."[1] Let us say with holy Job, "It is the will of GOD, blessed be the Name of the LORD."[2]

The venerable Avila assures us that one heartfelt expression, "GOD be praised," in the time of adversity, is even more to be valued than a thousand thanks in time of prosperity. We here again repeat what we said before, that he is in security who reposes in the hands of GOD'S mercy, because then are fulfilled the words of the HOLY SPIRIT, "There shall no evil happen to the just."[3] He is always in peace.

3rdly. The third means whereby to acquire the love of GOD is Mental Prayer. Eternal truths are not discerned by the eyes of the flesh as the visible things of this world: they are perceived only by thought and reflection: so that were we not to pause long to consider them severally, and especially those which concern our obligation to love GOD, because He deserves it on account of all the blessings He has heaped upon us, and of His love towards us, it would be very difficult for our soul to detach itself from creature affections, and centre itself in GOD. In prayer our LORD makes known to us the vanity of earthly things, and the value of heavenly

[1] S. John xvii. 11. [2] Job i. 21. [3] Prov. xii. 21.

things; in prayer He inflames those hearts which resist not His inspirations, and communicates to them precious and abundant graces. Many souls complain that when they pray they do not find GOD: it is because they pray with hearts full of earthly things. "Detach thy heart from creatures, seek GOD, and thou wilt find Him: the LORD is good unto them that wait for Him."[1] To find GOD in prayer the soul must despoil itself of all affection to all earthly things, and then GOD will speak to it. "I will bring her into the wilderness," saith the LORD, "and speak comfortably to her."[2] It is not a question here of external solitude: this is highly useful, but not sufficient. Solitude of the heart is necessary, which consists in detachment from creatures, and in the conquest of the passions. When a soul detached from earth begins to pray, how distinctly does GOD speak and make known to it all His love. "And then the soul," says an author, "burning with a sacred love, speaks no longer; but its silence is very expressive. The silence of love says more to GOD than all human eloquence: sighs make known all that passes in the interior of that soul; then she is not weary of repeating, 'My Beloved is mine, and I am His.'"[3]

It is true that often the most holy and disengaged souls feel even disgust in prayer; but this is because GOD will try them: therefore I say to these souls, Be not discouraged because of the dryness thou mayest experience in prayer, and imagine it not to have been in vain because filled with distractions. When these distractions occur, simply drive them away: then return calmly and composedly into the presence of GOD, and say to Him un-

[1] Lam. iii. 25. [2] Hos. ii. 14. [3] Cant. ii. 16.

ceasingly, "My GOD, have mercy on me! my GOD, have mercy on me! LORD, I deserve not Thy consolations! Alas! I have so many times deserved hell and Thy eternal maledictions! My LORD JESUS, give me Thy love!"

"The sacred gift of prayer," said S. Francis de Sales, "is quite ready in the right hand of our SAVIOUR: as soon as thou shalt be empty of thyself, that is, of the love of the flesh and of self-will, and truly humble, He will shed it into thy heart. Have patience to walk on step by step until thou have legs to run with, or rather wings wherewith to fly. GOD will fill thy vessel with His balm when He sees it empty of this world's perfumes."[1] Thou sayest, "I do nothing in prayer;" but what wouldst thou do except what thou already doest, viz., present and represent thy wretchedness to GOD? The most convincing appeal which beggars can make to us is to exhibit their sores or their wants. But thou sayest that at times thou canst not even do this; but thou remainest like a phantom or a statue. Well, that is no small thing. In palaces of kings and princes, statues are placed for no other use than to refresh the eyes of the prince. Be satisfied to be thus in the presence of GOD, and leave Him to animate the statue whenever it shall please Him.[2] There are indeed times when one is, in prayer, like a real statue: one can apparently neither think, nor speak, nor meditate, nor pray. What is to be done then? give up this sacred duty? No, assuredly. Are we to think our prayer has been displeasing to GOD? No, still less. We must simply abide where GOD has placed us; if He will that we should be inanimate in His presence as a mere statue, it is because He is glorified thereby; wherefore then wish

[1] Lettres de S. F. de Sales. [2] Ibid.

it differently? If a statue placed in a niche in a saloon could speak, and it were asked, "Wherefore art thou there?" it would reply, "Because my master the sculptor placed me here." "Wherefore movest thou not?" "Because he wills that I remain motionless." "Of what use art thou in this spot? and what does it avail thee to be thus?" "I am not here to serve myself, but to serve my master and obey his will." "But thou seest him not?" "No, but he sees me, and has pleasure in my abiding where he has placed me." "But wouldst thou not prefer to have motion, in order to go nearer to him?" "Not unless he were to command it." "Desirest thou nothing then?" "No, for I am where my master has placed me, and his will is the only satisfaction of my existence." Oh what a good prayer is it, and what a good way of abiding in GOD'S presence, to maintain oneself in His holy will and pleasure. I take it that S. Mary Magdalene was a statue in a niche, when speechless and motionless, and perhaps without lifting up her eyes to our LORD, she listened to what He said to her, sitting at His Feet; when He ceased to speak, she ceased to listen: and yet remained there still. A little child asleep in its mother's bosom is indeed in its good and desirable place, although she speak not to him, nor he to her.

Let us then never abandon the holy exercise of vocal and mental prayer. Alas! we are wanting in everything; but if we pray we become rich, because GOD has promised favourably to hear whoever prays to Him. He has said to us, "Ask and ye shall receive."[1] What greater proof of friendship can a friend give than by saying, "Ask whatever thou wilt; I will give it thee?" Well, this is

[1] S. John xvi. 24.

the language our LORD holds to each of us. GOD is the Master of all things that exist, and He promises to give all He is asked for. Therefore if we are poor it is our own fault: it is that we ask Him not for the gifts we need. It is likewise a truth that mental prayer is morally necessary to us all, because without prayer we, being encumbered by the cares of this world, think little of our souls; whereas when we begin to pray we discover our necessities: we ask for grace and obtain it.

The life of the saints has been a life of prayer and devotion: all those graces of the SPIRIT which combined to make them saints they obtained by prayer. If then we will be saved and be saints, we must always keep ourselves at the gate of the Divine mercy, to pray and ask for all we want. We want humility: let us ask for it, and we shall be humble: we want patience under tribulation; let us ask for it, and we shall be patient: we desire the love of GOD; let us ask for it, and we shall obtain it. "*Petite, et dabitur vobis: ask, and ye shall receive.*" This is our SAVIOUR'S promise, and He will faithfully perform it. This good Master, in order to give us greater confidence in prayer, has assured us, that whatever favours we ask in His Name, either by His love or by His merits, His FATHER will grant them all to us.[1] He says in another place, "If ye shall ask anything in My Name, I will do it."[2] What more is needful to us than such a promise? Let us accustom ourselves then to pray unceasingly; and in the midst of our occupations to send up our hearts to GOD every moment in fervent ejaculatory prayers; let us often ask of Him the forgiveness of our sins, the gift of final perseverance, and above all, His holy love.

[1] S. John xvi. 23. [2] S. John xiv. 14.

Let us hourly say, day and night, "Deus meus et omnia!" My GOD, I desire Thee only, and nothing else! LORD, I give my whole self to Thee; and if I know not how to give myself to Thee as I ought, take me Thyself.

4thly. The fourth means of acquiring the Divine love, is by meditating upon the Passion of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. It is certain that if JESUS CHRIST is so little loved in the world, it proceeds from the apathy and ingratitude of men, who will not reflect at least from time to time, upon all He has suffered for us, and upon the love wherewith He suffered. "It is accounted foolishness," writes S. Gregory, "that He Who is GOD should have died to save us, miserable slaves;" but yet it is of faith that GOD did so, and He chose to shed all His blood to purify us from our sins.[1]

"O my GOD," exclaims S. Bonaventure, "Thou hast loved me so much, that it might be said, Thou hast hated Thyself! Not only hast Thou willed to die upon the Cross, in the midst of terrible anguish, but Thou hast carried Thy love for me even to be Thyself my food in the Holy Communion; and there Thou remainest until the consummation of ages, our refuge, and our consolation in the sorrows of this life. O JESUS, I say again, Thou hast so much loved us as to appear to have hated Thyself."

O let us meditate upon the Passion of our loving Master, and soon we shall feel our souls kindled with love for Him. What will not men do for the love of a frail creature, which they take into their affection? And we will not love GOD, Whose goodness and loveliness are infinite; Who died for each one of us; Who has done all for our

[1] Eph. v. 2, and Rev. i. 5.

happiness. Let us cast our eyes upon the Cross; let us there contemplate our LORD JESUS stretching forth His arms to us, and shall we dare to refuse Him our love? O my crucified JESUS, have pity upon me! Soften the hardness of my heart, and give streams of tears to my eyes, that I may unceasingly weep for Thine exceeding anguish, and my sins which caused them.

S. Bonaventure says that nothing is more adapted to sanctify a soul, than meditation upon the Passion of JESUS CHRIST; and he gives us the advice to meditate upon it every day, if we will make progress in the love of GOD. S. Augustine asserts that a single tear shed in remembrance of the Passion, is more pleasing to GOD, and beneficial to a soul, than fasts and continual austerities. For this reason it is that the saints have always employed themselves in meditation on the sufferings of JESUS CHRIST. It was by continual meditation on the Passion that S. Francis of Assisi became the Seraphic. Once, when he was shedding tears abundantly, some one asked him wherefore he wept thus? "Alas, my brother," replied he, "I weep for the sufferings and the shame of my SAVIOUR, and what affects me most of all, is that men, for whom He suffered so much, think not of it." In saying these words, his tears increased so much, that his interrogator could not refrain from weeping also. The bleating of a lamb, or any other fact which reminded him of the Passion, sufficed to make this saint shed tears. One day, when he was sick, one of those in attendance upon him advised him to have some book of devotion read to him. He replied, "My book is JESUS crucified." Let it be ours likewise, and we shall soon have learnt to love GOD with all our strength: our GOD, Who was once

bound, fettered, like a mean slave, mocked, buffeted, scourged, and crucified for our salvation. O LORD, remind me each moment of what Thou hast suffered for me, that I may never forget to love Thee. Sacred Thongs which bound my Divine Master, ye Thorns which crowned His adorable Head, wound my hard heart; Nails which pierced the feet and hands of my SAVIOUR, nail me, that I may live and die united to JESUS. Precious Blood, transport me. JESUS, Who didst die for love of me, cause me to die to all earthly affections, to live no longer, but to Thee only. Amen.

Practical Resolutions.

TO ACT IN EVERYTHING TOWARDS GOD, AS A CHILD ACTS TOWARDS THE MOST TENDER FATHER, IN ALL SIMPLICITY AND CONFIDENCE.

My dear Theotime, does thy conscience bear thee the consoling testimony that thou lovest GOD with all thy soul, and better than all in this world?

Alas, my father, I feel that I love Him not yet as He deserves, but methinks my most ardent desire is to love Him ever more and more. The more I love Him, the more I desire to love Him; the more I learn to know Him, the more I see how He deserves all my love.

Thou art happy, Theotime, and assuredly thy lot is an enviable one; for he pleases GOD, to whom GOD is pleasing: and it is a sign we love Him, when we desire to love Him.

My father, I cannot tell thee how much relieved I am by this answer of thine: it is so sweet to yield to the thought of being pleasing to GOD. But I pray thee tell

me what I should do, to show to my loving FATHER all the love wherewith my heart is inflamed towards Him. What thinkest thou, my father, that I should do more to please Him?

One thing, my dear Theotime; try to have a filial and unlimited confidence in His goodness and mercy, and to give thyself up unreservedly to His Divine Will. Our LORD JESUS wills that we act towards Him as towards our best Friend, in sicknesses, in spiritual desolation, in consolation, in success, and in scruples. He likewise wills that we should commit to Him all that concerns ourselves, and those we love. He wills that we should confide to Him all our fears and hopes, and all this with perfect simplicity. Be thou henceforth faithful in giving thyself up with confidence to the love and mercy of our good Master.

1st. *In sickness.*—When thou art in sickness, and suffering some infirmity, draw near to JESUS, and say to Him, "Loving Friend of my heart, behold how I am suffering,[1] and speedily help me. I submit to Thy good pleasure. If it be Thy will that this my sickness be of long duration, it is likewise my will; if Thou wilt that I be cured of it, I will it likewise. Do Thy will, O my GOD, I am ready for all. I offer to Thee my sufferings, and ask of Thee patience and resignation." Imagine thyself to see our LORD in person, coming to visit thee, placing Himself beside thy bed, and speaking to thee in these words, "My child, behold Me here, to be with thee, and bring thee gifts. Thou sufferest much, is it not so?" "Oh yes, my GOD, much." "Wouldst thou have this pain removed?" "Yes, doubtless, LORD; but I desire

[1] Lam. i. 20.

only what Thou wilt Thyself." "By this sickness that I have sent thee, thou honourest and glorifiest Me; thou art purging away such and such sins of thy past life: thou art gaining such and such graces: nevertheless, if thou still desirest to be cured, thou hast only to ask it, and I will heal thee." "No, gracious JESUS, be Thy will fulfilled, and not mine![1] I abandon myself to Thee; Thou knowest better than I do what is right for me."

2ndly. *In spiritual desolation.*—There are days when even the holiest souls fall into a state of such disgust, dryness, darkness, and desolation, that they are almost tempted to believe that GOD has forsaken them: this state often lasts for a long time, according as GOD sees it beneficial for the soul He wills thus to purify. At those times one is tormented by a thousand temptations to pride, anger, impurity, and despair: one is apparently without any love of GOD, without hope, without faith. All seems lost. What wilt thou do, my dear Theotime, when thou shalt find thyself exposed to a similar desolation? Hasten to have recourse to JESUS! Thou shalt say to Him, "My GOD, my GOD, where art Thou? Why hast Thou forsaken me? Why hidest Thou Thyself from me?[2] Thou knowest that I love Thee, that my chief desire is to love Thee, ever more and more. Oh, I pray Thee, have pity on me! I have cast myself trustingly into Thine arms: forsake me not, I beseech Thee, O my GOD!" After having thus poured out thy heart to JESUS, maintain thyself in peace, and say always, notwithstanding thy disgusts and drynesses, "My kind Master, my best Friend, Thy will be done; I love Thee, and will for ever love Thee." As for the rest, thou must wait with patience the moment

[1] S. Luke xxii. 42. [2] Ps. xxii. 1; x. 1; xiii. 1.

when GOD will vouchsafe to restore thee the unction of His grace. If that moment be long in coming, be not troubled, and hope on: for GOD "shall not suffer the righteous to fall for ever."[1] If He sometimes hide Himself, it is for our greater good. A good mother was walking with her child, still very tender in years; she held him by the hand lest he should fall, and carried him in her arms, when they came to a difficult pass. The child, however, perceived a flower; he suddenly quits hold of the guiding hand, runs to the flower, gathers it, and retraces his steps to find his mother. But alas, he sees no one. In vain does he look on all sides, no one appears. He calls aloud; no one answers. Poor child, he begins to cry and sob. Then comes his mother forward, who had concealed herself to see what her child would do upon finding himself alone. She now takes him into her arms, presses him to her bosom, covers him with fond kisses, and comforts him with the words, "Now, my son, thou seest how I love thee." It is thus, my dear Theotime, that GOD deals with the souls He loves. He hides Himself from them for a time, in order to prove their love, and to have an opportunity of heaping upon them precious graces. Never, therefore, be frightened at these inward desolations. It is a sign that GOD loves thee, because He dealt thus with JESUS CHRIST, and with all His Elect. As an encouragement to thyself, have frequently before thine eyes, the conduct of S. Catharine of Genoa, amidst her spiritual griefs. They were sometimes so great, that it seemed to her she had nothing more to hope for, and that she was quite forsaken by GOD. Notwithstanding this, she continued faithful as ever to all

[1] Ps. lv. 23; Isa. lvii. 16.

her religious duties; whatever weariness she experienced therein, she omitted none, nor cut off the least portion of them. There is yet another thing, my dear Theotime, which thou must not omit to do when in spiritual desolation, viz., to repeat frequently these words, which are an act of perfect love, "My gracious JESUS, whatever weariness I now experience in Thy service, whatever grief I feel, I love Thee not the less with my whole heart; I rejoice to know that Thou enjoyest in heaven a pure and unalterable happiness; to Thee belongs joy, and to me grief."

3rdly. *In consolation and success.*—When thy affairs are prosperous, and thou art in good spirits on their account; when thou receivest spiritual consolation, and thy whole soul is satisfied, fail not to share thy happiness with the LORD JESUS. Since thou beseechest Him to take part, and comfort thee in thy griefs, when thou hast any, is it not just that thou shouldst likewise ask Him to take part in whatsoever causes thee gladness? Say then to Him, "O JESUS, it is to Thee I am indebted for these good tidings, for the success of this affair; Thy mercy be praised for ever. I come to lay at Thy feet the joy I am feeling, that the honour thereof may be Thine. Accept my offering, and bless me."

Assuredly, my dear Theotime, fear not; speak to Him of all that concerns thee as often as thou needest, for thou wilt never weary Him. O, if thou lovest Him, thou wilt always have something to say to Him. In His great goodness, He is pleased to deal with us as an equal with an equal, and He rejoices when we communicate to Him our most minute and ordinary concerns. Know well, my dear Theotime, that JESUS loves thee, and takes as much

care of thee as though He had only thee to think of. So watchful is He over thine interests, that one might say, His Providence is engaged only in helping thee, His Almighty Power in protecting thee, His mercy and goodness in having compassion upon thee, doing thee good, and winning by every sort of means thy confidence and love. Discover to Him then freely all thy feelings, and pray Him to be thy guide in perfectly fulfilling His Holy Will. Commend to Him the care of thy salvation, and say to Him, "JESUS, have pity on me, I abandon myself to Thee for time and eternity."

Pray to Him for the perseverance of the righteous, "LORD JESUS, forsake not Thy servants amidst the dangers they incur: shed on them the most abundant graces, and grant them eternal life."

Pray for the conversion of sinners. O how many unhappy ones lose their souls daily; how many resist the inspirations of grace, the tears, counsels, prayers, of their friends, and live in a state of sin. How many at this moment are lying on the bed of death; have only an hour longer perhaps, to prepare to meet their Sovereign Judge, and yet obstinately refuse to avail themselves thereof. O pray, pray for them, Theotime, and thou wilt obtain their conversion; pray for them: for an humble, confiding, persevering prayer, often does more for the conversion of a soul than a great number of instructions. Therefore pray.

Pray Him for His Church. Implore Him ever to send forth into it holy Priests—after His own heart—Priests full of zeal for His glory. My dear Theotime, charitably likewise pray for me sometimes; I shall not be ungrateful.

Pray Him, for the conversion of the faithful and of

heretics. What subject of grief and of bitter tears, for a soul which loves JESUS, is the sight of so many millions of men who know Him not, or else, who know Him not aright. My GOD, until when wilt Thou not have compassion on these poor creatures? O Theotime, let us implore JESUS our SAVIOUR to look with mercy on the many souls, whom He has purchased so dearly. Let us pray for those zealous Priests, who risk their own lives, to carry to the end of the earth, the light of truth; let us pray; and their labours, quickened by our prayers, will bear abundant fruit unto salvation. Let us pray, and we shall snatch from hell a multitude of souls, now in danger of falling thereinto.

Let us pray especially for those of our brethren who have unhappily separated from the Holy Catholic Church: O let us pray for these frequently and fervently, and our prayers will obtain for them the grace no longer to resist the voice of GOD, which cries to them to return into the bosom of the true Church: let us pray for them, and our prayers will hasten the day of their perfect restoration to unity: let us pray for them, and we shall rejoice the heart of our good Master, Who wills that all men should be saved.

Pray to JESUS for all those persons who are dear to thee: thou canst not give them greater proof of thy attachment.

Pray likewise for all the faithful souls who wait for GOD everywhere, that they may have rest and light, and a merciful judgment at the last day.

Let us pray always, and take for our device *prayer, confidence, and love.*

CHAPTER XLV.

How light and easy is the Yoke of the Lord. We can only be happy while bearing it.

"Come unto Me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."—S. Matth. xi. 28—30.

Men naturally seek happiness; to find it they often sacrifice their repose and their health, and even expose their lives to the greatest dangers in its pursuit: but how many are there who find it? Alas, but a few, in spite of all their efforts, succeed in realising it. Whence is this? It is that we seek it where it is not. We will be happy, but we will not seek happiness in the place where it dwells. We try to find it in riches, in sensual pleasures, in honours, in science; but sooner or later we are convinced that all these things cannot satisfy the heart.

Behold that man: He has laboured all his life to acquire riches: the thought of the happiness they were to procure him has sustained him in the midst of his labours, fatigues, and watchings. Now he sails upon the gulf of abundance; he sees himself in the midst of his treasures; all appears to smile upon him. No doubt he is happy and satisfied? No, alas! he perceives that his riches are beneath him! he was not made for them: he feels that, far from affording him happiness, they only bring him disquietude and trouble; he lacks nothing, and yet is ever gnawed by new desires: he would fain have peace, and yet is continually restless because of these same riches. Poor miserable man! He had much fatigue to go through to

gain his treasures, and lo! he now understands that they can only be possessed with trembling, and lost with grief.

The voluptuous man revels in shameful passions: he curbs not his foul desires; he seeks in sensual pleasures the happiness he longs for. Bitter delusion! He finds only hard thorns where he thought to gather roses. His passion demands constant aliment: the unhappy man procures it, but finds that nothing can satisfy it: it cries to him for ever, "Give, give." O, is there then happiness in the pleasures of sense? Hear the voice of the voluptuary reply, "No: I thought to find it there, and there I sought for it, but have proved these false pleasures to last but for an instant, while the remorse which follows them is eternal."

The ambitious man has moved heaven and earth to attain honours, and has found them even to satiety. The whole world extols his happiness, and envies his lot. But he himself is unhappy: he would fain have something which, while gratifying his pride, might also fill his heart; but he perceives, alas! too late, that he has been mistaken, and has embraced but empty smoke.

The scientific man daily increases his knowledge: each day while he learns he discovers some new truths. With all this, is he happy? Alas! his heart remains too often a vacuum, and he ends by comprehending that all science is nothing, and powerless to render him truly happy.

O my GOD, where then is happiness? Whither shall I go to seek it upon earth? In the palaces of kings and princes? These form a habitation for corroding cares, and for griefs the more bitter inasmuch as they are often disguised beneath the outward garb of happiness. In the dwellings of the rich? I only see tears therein. In the

tent of the sinner? I there behold bitter remorse. Where then, O my GOD, shall I find that happiness with which I cannot dispense? Where may I lay down this burden of wretchedness which oppresses me? I hear Thy answer, O blessed JESUS: "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." Yes, my JESUS, Thou only canst give me tranquillity, peace, and the happiness I desire, without which I cannot possibly live. In vain shall I seek it in wealth, honours, pleasure, or in any creature whatsoever, for I shall never attain my end. My heart will be always sick, always uneasy, always discontented. It is Thou Who permittest it thus, O my GOD! because this heart, having been only created for Thee, remains in perpetual disquietude so long as it is not wholly Thine, other objects besides Thee may occupy, but not fill it, or render it happy!

"Take My yoke upon you." O ye unhappy children of Adam! behold the only means ye have of arriving at true happiness. Cast away your passions: trample under foot base human respect, that vice of cowardly and apathetic souls: despise the judgment of a contemptible world, and take upon you the yoke of JESUS CHRIST. . . . . Let not the word "yoke" alarm thee; that which the LORD imposes in nothing resembles that of the world and the devil; it is a yoke full of sweetness, exceeding light. O happy, supremely happy, is he who bears this holy yoke! happy who loves JESUS! he comprehends all there is of sweetness in His service, of ineffability in His love.

The great S. Paul no sooner tasted the sweetness of CHRIST's yoke than he exclaimed, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height

nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of GOD which is in CHRIST JESUS our LORD."[1] In the midst of fatigue, labours, continual privations, and the dangers of his apostleship, he enjoyed so great a happiness, that he wrote to the faithful in Corinth these remarkable words: "I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation."[2] When has a man, drunken with this world's pleasures, ever held this language? When has he, even in the midst of his greatest enjoyments, ever said, "I am happy?" Never. On the contrary, his sad every day's experience has often drawn from him an avowal, which from his lips is of great weight, while he has said with King Solomon: "All was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun."[3]

They exhorted S. Polycarp to forsake the service of JESUS CHRIST, and they threatened him with death if he obeyed not. "I have eighty and six years served Him, and He never did me any hurt; how can I blaspheme my King, Who has saved me?"

S. Augustine prior to his conversion had led a life of profligacy: he had spent a great number of years in forgetfulness of GOD, and in the irregularities of his passions. Being recalled at length to virtue, and transported with holy joy at having been set free from his chains, his gratitude thus broke forth, "O my GOD, Thou hast burst my bonds! may my heart and tongue praise Thee for ever, that Thou hast given me to receive Thy gracious yoke, and the light burden of Thy law! How sweet did it at once become to me to want the sweetness of those

[1] Rom. viii. 38, 39. [2] 2 Cor. vii. 4.
[3] Eccles. ii. 11; i. 2.

toys! and what I feared to be parted from was now a joy to part with.

"For Thou didst cast them from me, Thou true and highest sweetness. Thou castest them forth, and for them enteredst in Thyself, sweeter than all pleasures, though not to flesh and blood. Now was my soul free from the eating cares of those who run after honours, wealth, and sensual pleasures, and my infant tongue spake freely to Thee, my brightness, and my riches, and my health, the LORD my GOD. . . . . Too late loved I Thee, O Thou beauty of ancient days, yet ever new, too late I loved Thee! . . . Thou breathedst odours, and I drew in breath, and sighed after Thee. I tasted, and hunger and thirst . . . . O JESUS! too little doth he love Thee who loves anything with Thee, which he loveth not for Thee! O Love, Who ever burnest and never consumest! O my GOD, Who art charity, kindle me."

S. Francis Xavier found so much happiness in the service of JESUS, that frequently unable to sustain the inward joy which overflowed his heart, he exclaimed, "LORD, LORD, it is enough, I cannot bear more."

I could multiply these examples endlessly; but I limit myself to these four which I have taken, as though at hazard, in the annals of the saints. Those who love GOD understand me, and know how sweet it is to serve Him. Yes, I say and repeat it, and may all men hear my voice. Happy, supremely happy is he, who loves and serves JESUS, our loving Master!

Deep peace will be his portion: "*Pax multa diligentibus legem tuam.*" He will possess even in this world a happiness which JESUS alone can give; he will enjoy the sweet tranquillity of a good conscience; his heart will over-

flow with pure delights and ineffable consolations; he will suffer with holy resignation the evils of this life, and will see death approach without trouble and dread, because his soul will be pure and without remorse. "Pax multa diligentibus legem tuam!" Yes, O my JESUS, great is the peace that they have who love Thy law. Peace is the portion of those who love Thee. There is no peace out of Thee. Let others choose for their portion, pleasures, honours, and riches. As for me, O JESUS, I choose Thee for the GOD of my heart. Thou art my inheritance, my happiness, my treasure, my life, my all. Thou alone sufficest me.

I feel it; I cannot live without the calm and peace which a good conscience procures: I cannot live without JESUS. I must then, whatever it may cost me, belong to that kind Master. What happiness when I may no longer have wherewith to reproach myself, when raising my eyes to heaven, I may say, "That beautiful heaven where a hundred millions of stars so brightly shine, is the palace of my FATHER, my best Friend, my GOD! He loves me, and I love Him likewise." What happiness! O ye worldly and carnal souls, ye understand not this happiness: but purify your hearts, and soon ye will comprehend His greatness.

My gracious SAVIOUR! vouchsafe to admit me into the number of Thy faithful servants, and cherished children. I know I am far from deserving such a favour; the numberless sins of my past life have rendered me unworthy of it, and I know too well, how I have deserved Thine anger. Alas, I an ungrateful and unnatural son, have shamefully deserted Thee, to range myself in the train of Thy most bitter enemy. "O my FATHER, I am no more worthy to be called Thy son,"[1] but yet I will go on hoping in Thy

[1] S. Luke xv. 21.

goodness. Behold me before Thee, melted at the sight of Thy mercy, ashamed at having dishonoured Thee by my desertion; vouchsafe to re-establish me in Thy favour, and kindle in me Thy holy love, that I may never leave Thee more. O my JESUS, wherefore do I not love Thee as Thou deservest? But at least I love Thee with my whole heart, more than all things, more than myself, and I desire Thy Paradise, that I may there love Thee eternally, without fear of losing Thee. "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee, my GOD, the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."[1] Amen.

Practical Resolutions.

TO MAKE NO DELAY IN GIVING UP OURSELVES WHOLLY TO GOD.

We shall soon be arrived, O Theotime, at the end of our course. I have striven to the best of my power, to make thee comprehend the whole extent of the love of JESUS for thee: I have sought to lead thee in gratitude to Him, and to excite in thy heart those feelings of loving trust which our kind LORD wills to find in the hearts of those who serve Him. Have I attained my end? Canst thou answer me, "I love my GOD with all my heart, and in His mercy I have a confidence, which nothing can take from me?" I hope it may be thus. I trust that JESUS will have blessed my feeble efforts, and that thy soul will have yielded to the captivation of the charms of Divine love. Live then happy and in peace, and attach thyself more and more to our good and tender Master, until

[1] Ps. lxxiii. 24, 25.

death come to convey thee to His feet, there to receive the immortal crown of glory, and the reward He has promised to His faithful servants.

But whence comes a sudden sadness over my soul? Alas, I will reveal to thee simply that which passes within me. Methinks I see among those who will take the trouble to read this work, one poor Christian, who will not turn it to profit, and who, although well convinced of the necessity of working out his salvation, and of loving JESUS, Who first loved him, will still continue to say in the depth of his heart, "To-morrow, to-morrow; I will be converted to-morrow. To-morrow I will leave off being ungrateful, and I will love JESUS."

Whoever thou art who holdest this language, I beseech thee harden not thy heart, but return to GOD, Who is calling thee.[1] Thereon hangs thy happiness in this world and the next. Confess whether it be not true, that in living thus far from thy GOD, thou leadest an unhappy life? Is it not true that thy soul resembles a sea, whose waves are troubled?[2] Is it not true that thy passions become thy most cruel tormentors? that remorse comes unceasingly to disturb thy deluded pleasures? Answer me. In vain thou seekest to deceive thyself; in vain to persuade thyself thou art happy; thou carriest within thee two witnesses, whom thou canst not deceive, whose eyes, and continual upbraidings thou canst not avoid. I mean GOD and thy conscience. Go where thou wilt, into heaven, into hell, down into the centre of the earth; hide thyself in the thickest darkness; thou wilt ever be in the presence of these two witnesses: they will be always repeating in thine ears, "life is short, death is approaching, and the everlasting gulf is opening beneath thy feet;"

[1] Ps. xcv. 8. [2] Isa. lvii. 20, 21.

in the midst of thy festivals and pleasures they will cry to thee, "Unhappy one! is it for this thou art on earth? is it thus thou workest out thy salvation?"

Thou repliest, "It is true that these two witnesses saw me everywhere: but I am accustomed to their upbraidings, which leave no longer any impression on my soul; I live in calmness."

Thou livest in calmness? and yet cherishest sin in thy heart? Thou lovest not GOD? O woe! woe to thy calm! it is a thousand times more fearful than the tempest.

"But yet, after all, I see not that any great calamity has happened to me in consequence of having sinned, and not served the LORD;[1] my affairs prosper, my riches increase, honours are showered down upon my head;[2] how could I be better off if I served GOD?"

O insensate that thou art, knowest thou not that the happiness thou boastest of, is like a deep pit, into which thou art soon about to fall? Knowest thou not, that GOD does in a measure give the reins to the wicked, in order to draw them tightly by-and-by? Ah, thy joy resembles that of a fish, which devours with pleasure the bait which is to take it. Thy happiness will be brief, and soon others will succeed to thy wealth and dignities.[3] Knowest thou not that GOD is never so wroth with the sinner, as when He suffers him to prosper in the midst of his iniquities? O my brother! I beseech thee learn to know better thy real interests, and "seek first the kingdom of GOD and His righteousness."[4] Alas, if thou sow iniquity, thou wilt, ere long, reap the evils thereof.[5] "When a wicked man dieth, his expectation

[1] Ecclus. v. 4.
[2] Job xxi. 7, 9, 13.
[3] Ps. xlix. 18.
[4] S. Matth. vi. 33.
[5] Prov. xxii. 8; Job iv. 8.

shall perish:"[1] for the hope of the ungodly "is like dust that is blown away with the wind: like a thin froth that is driven away with the storm: like as the smoke which is dispersed here and there with the tempest, and passeth away as the remembrance of a guest that tarrieth but a day."[2] Thou shalt, when thou least lookest for it, "perish by the blast of GOD, and be consumed by the breath of His nostrils."[3]

"But may not these be but vain threats?"

Vain threats? Hear the reply of the HOLY SPIRIT, in the Book of Job:—"Knowest thou not this of old, since man was placed upon earth, that the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment? Though his excellency mount up to the heavens, and his head reach unto the clouds, yet he shall perish for ever like vile dung. They which have seen him shall say, Where is he? He shall fly away as a dream, and shall not be found; yea, he shall be chased away as a vision of the night. The poor shall oppress his children, and his hands shall restore their goods."[4]

"I would willingly be converted, but I fear the ridicule of the world."

Let the world talk, but do thou thy duty. How! when the question is to gain some paltry sum of money, to attain an elevated position, to obtain a more lucrative employment, thou strivest openly and boldly, caring little for what others think or say; and yet when it is to serve GOD, and go to heaven, thou darest not do anything, for fear of displeasing such a person or friend. When thou shouldst show thyself a Christian, thou makest thyself a

[1] Prov. xi. 7.
[2] Wisdom v. 14.
[3] Job iv. 9.
[4] Job xx. 4—8, 10.

slave to others! O baseness! O cowardice! Blush with shame, unworthy Christian; blush with shame. Thou hast courage and energy for everything, except to serve thy GOD! Say, when thou shalt be damned for having pleased men, will they come and snatch thee from the abyss of hell? They will scoff at thy weakness, and despise thee.

"What shall I do then?"

What thou must do is to tread under foot the fear of man; to show thyself what thou art in the sight of heaven and earth; viz., a Christian, truly worthy of so glorious a title: it is to fulfil with exactitude all the duties which that name lays upon thee.

"But I shall be talked about."

Yes, and it will be said that thou art fearless; it will be said that thou hast a great soul; and for one who will censure thy conduct, a hundred will take it as a model. After all, let the world talk as it will, it is not the less true that thou belongest to JESUS CHRIST; and thou art bound to give thyself wholly to Him. Is JESUS, then, a Master whose service is a disgrace? Is there any dishonour in avowing oneself His disciple?

"The avowal thereof frightens me."

Ah! because thou knowest not what it is. Thou forgettest the ineffable consolation it procures to a soul preyed upon by remorse; thou knowest not the sweet peace it sheds in a heart which had never before realized its delights; thou knowest not the happy change it effects in those poor sinners who have recourse to it. My dear brother, believe what I say herein. I am the minister of the GOD of Truth, and have no interest in deceiving thee; but on the contrary, desire thy happiness as I de-

sire my own. Well, then, I can assure thee, that nothing on earth is to be compared with the happiness experienced by a soul sincerely converted to GOD, when having confessed all its sins, it hears these consoling words: "Go in peace; I declare to thee from GOD that all thy sins are forgiven and forgotten. Go and sin no more." I know how much it costs sometimes to confess all our wretched condition; but can a passing shame be weighed in the balance with the blessed effects it produces? Is it not better to humble oneself, and thus obtain the pardon of our sins, than wait for GOD's Hand to humble us? Ah! if thou wilt not humble thyself by the lowly confession of thy sins, GOD Himself will humble thee by His heavy Hand. Wilt thou be able to bear the weight of that Almighty Hand which will crush thee? Canst thou avoid His terrible strokes? Know well, that as much as that Hand is light and gentle to raise up the man who humbles himself, it is as strong and heavy to abase the proud. Go, my brother, and confess thy sins as unto thy LORD JESUS CHRIST; show him all the wounds of thy soul, and GOD will heal them; show him thine iniquities, and GOD will blot them out. Courage! Make some effort, and GOD will do the rest. Address thyself to JESUS; implore Him to come to thy help, and teach thee to taste, and see for thyself how sweet it is to serve the LORD. Courage! life is short; it flies like a dream, and death will soon come to seize thee. Oh! how comforted wilt thou be at thy last moments, if thou have made a good confession whilst still in health! How happy wilt thou be at having set thy conscience in order! Give up thyself, then, to the LORD, not to-morrow, but to-day, —at once. Whatever it cost thee, be to Him as His child, if thou wilt not one day be to Him only a slave. Be

His; serve Him with ease; and love Him to thy latest breath: heaven will be thy reward.

O my GOD! how many unhappy sinners are there to whom in their lifetime it was said a hundred times, "Be converted, and make a good confession;" and who, through continual procrastination till the morrow have been overtaken by death! Where are they now? Alas! in hell, there to deplore their miserable fate, to curse their cowardice. And they are there for ever! O my brother, learn by their example to be wise, and not to put off longer thy conversion. If it costs thee much to-day to break off this or that dangerous intimacy or criminal habit, to conquer the fear of man, and to make a good confession, it will cost thee yet more to-morrow. Therefore return to GOD with no further delay; cast thyself at the feet of JESUS. He is goodness and mercy, and has never rejected a penitent sinner. Happy the man who seeks Him; happier still the man who has found Him; a thousand times more happy yet is he who loves Him. He enjoys a happiness no human tongue can express.

CHAPTER XLVI.

OF PARADISE.

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which GOD hath prepared for them that love Him."—1 Cor. ii. 9.

PARADISE! O my GOD! at the thought alone of that lovely abode, my soul overflows with consolation, my heart faints with joy and love, mine eyes are fountains of tears!

When I think of Paradise, I realise how sweet it is to serve the LORD: I comprehend that the troubles of this life are not worthy to be compared with the reward which is prepared for us in the next.

When I think of Paradise, my sorrows are turned into joy; humiliation and contempt have charms for me, and methinks the heaviest crosses become light.

O Paradise! Where is the man who will teach us what thou art? David exclaims, "Very excellent things are spoken of thee, thou city of GOD!"[1] "Oh, how amiable are Thy dwellings, Thou LORD of Hosts!"[2] and he says no more. S. Paul was caught up into the third heaven; and does he give us a brilliant description of what he has seen there? Nay, but he writes in one of his epistles, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which GOD hath prepared for those who love Him."[3]

Thus speaks the great Apostle. Dare I then seek to depict the beauties and the delights of heaven? Shall I not, in attempting it, resemble a child reared in wild forests, who, desiring to give an idea of the splendid palaces of our kings, compares them to the miserable hut where he was born? O my GOD, I acknowledge my temerity and powerlessness; nevertheless I will speak. A wretched exile finds solace in speaking of his country, although he knows that his words can give but a miserable idea of the reality. Therefore will I speak.

Oh, what a fair abode is the heavenly Jerusalem! Its walls are built with most precious stones, its gates are dazzling bright with finest pearls; its streets and courts are paved with purest gold; its gardens enamelled with

[1] Ps. lxxxvii. 2. [2] Ps. lxxxiv. 1. [3] 2 Cor. xii. 3, 4.

flowers, afford a brilliant sight.[1] There for ever resound words of gladness—there are chanted perpetual canticles of bliss—there renewed unwearied cries of joy—concerts of blessed spirits.[2] There balm and perfumes scatter sweet odours; there reigns peace—a rest passing all understanding; a calm above all imagination, eternal day, unity formed by one and the self-same Spirit indwelling all, firm security, assured eternity, endless tranquillity, pleasing felicity, ineffable sweetness, delicious enchantment; there the righteous shine as the sun, in the kingdom of their FATHER.[3] What blessedness to sing in the choirs of angels, to be ever in the company of patriarchs and prophets, apostles and martyrs, confessors and virgins, and above all, in that of the glorious Virgin Mary, mother of GOD! What happiness to be evermore exempted from fear and sadness, grief and trouble, from perplexity, weariness, labour, disgust—and, in short, from every want![4] But then what overflowing of consolations! what a multitude of delights! what an excess of joy! what a vast extent and deep abyss of pleasures to behold the ineffable glory of the Trinity, that Infinite and Incomprehensible Being, that sweet and ravishing light never sufficiently to be loved! To see the GOD of Gods, the LORD of Lords, in Sion. Not as in a glass, darkly, but face to face,[5] and the Sacred Humanity of JESUS CHRIST in His state of glory.

If so much pleasure is to be found on earth, in considering the grandeur, diversity, revolutions, and brilliant light of the stars and planets, the dazzling splendour of

[1] Rev. xxi. 18, 19, 21.
[2] Job iii. 22.
[3] S. Matth. xiii. 43.
[4] Rev. vii. 16, 17; xxi. 4.
[5] 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

the sun's rays, the silvery brightness of the moon; the light shed through the firmament: in viewing the variety of birds, flowers, landscapes, and colours; in hearing the melodious sound of sweet voices, and soft harmony of music; in inhaling the scent of flowers and perfumes, in partaking of delicious food: if all these things possess and penetrate the heart with gladness, O what will be the torrent of delight inebriating the soul, when it shall see, hear, feel, taste, and wholly possess Him Who is Beauty and Goodness itself, the Principle from Whom emanates all that is good and beautiful in the universe, the fertile source of all perfection, from whence all else is but a mere stream? I can conceive what is the state of man when risen from the dead, and entering into his most blessed eternity. It is, as when spring, succeeding the inclemency of winter, comes to revive nature, to embellish heaven and earth, and to rejoice all hearts. But what do I say? There is more difference between these two things, than between the thick darkness of the blackest night, and the light of the sun at noon. How blissful then is the abode of the heavenly Jerusalem, where all that refreshes abundantly exists, and from whence all that grieves is excluded! How sweet where reigns the happiness of praising the Almighty during eternal ages!

O most blessed abode, all resplendent with glory! How I love thy beauty! How I love thee, O happy dwelling of the glory of my LORD and my GOD! My heart ardently desires thee, and sighs for thee incessantly. Holy Jerusalem, thou city so brilliant with light, my great happiness is to think of thee. I languish with love of thee, because in thee alone can I see my GOD face to face, and as He is. Why may I not enter this day within the

enclosure of thy walls, there to love my gracious SAVIOUR as much as I can love Him? When shall I have ended this weary pilgrimage, which has already lasted but too long? When shall I be set free from this exile, which keeps me at so great distance from my LORD GOD? O JESUS, I have too long wandered from Thee like a strayed sheep, but Thou hast had compassion on me, and hast brought me back to the fold. I beseech Thee in the name of Thy mercy, have pity on my misery and my tears, and give me Thy Paradise, that I may love Thee as Thou meritest. Alas, I desire to love Thee much, and I pine away with sorrow, that I love Thee so little and so unworthily.

My soul, wait patiently. The voice of our JESUS is heard. He tells us that this our exile will not last for ever, that our pilgrimage will come to an end. Let us then suffer with courage all the evils of this life; let us be faithful to our duties, let us exercise ourselves in the practice of holiness; let us resolutely bear our cross to the end of our life; and then will be our reward. And what a reward! There will be JESUS, with a crown of glory, and He will give us a most sweet reception.

Open! O ye gates of heaven! Let me for a few instants behold that which is within the enclosure of the City of Zion. I would there witness the triumphant entrance of a righteous soul, and be present at its coronation. Open, then, O ye gates of heaven!

Lo, there comes a soul, pure, and clothed in the robe of its innocence: it bears about it some glorious scars, the testimony of its courage in warfare. It is adorned with precious stones, which are the results of the graces it acquired upon earth by its sufferings, resignation to the will

of GOD, and faithfulness to all its duties. The sins which it committed, and made amends for resolutely by penitence, even serve to show off the brilliancy of its beauty. It comes forward, led by its guardian angel.

"Enter," he says, "O soul, cherished by thy Sovereign LORD: here is the place of thine everlasting rest."

O GOD, how great is the emotion of that soul, upon first finding itself in that beautiful home, for which it so long panted! With what a look does it gaze upon all the objects which embellish it! What riches! what brilliancy! what splendour!

The angels and the saints come to meet it, and say to it, "Thou art welcome!" Soon it sees itself surrounded by its relatives, and friends, and acquaintances, who congratulate it upon its happiness; it recognizes a father, a husband, a sister, a friend, who had preceded it, into that blessed abode: it recognizes the patron saints who helped it onwards, whilst yet on earth; and many others in that blest abode. It knows them, and feels a joy no mortal tongue can express.

Our LORD JESUS sits upon a throne brilliant with glory. No sooner perceives He the new comer, than He says to it, "Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away. For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, My love, My fair one, and come away. O My dove, that wert in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let Me see thy countenance, let Me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance

is comely."[1] Come, then, My pure dove, whom I have chosen for My beloved spouse; come, that I may establish My throne in thy own heart; come to enjoy that perfect happiness which I promised thee; come, after all thy many dangers, troubles, labours, to share with My angels the delights of the LORD thy GOD; come, at length to behold Him without a veil, and to love Him for all eternity. Then JESUS embraces and blesses it, and places a shining crown upon its head, and leads it to the throne prepared for it. The saints and angels shout triumphantly, and cry, "Thus shall every one be crowned who shall have been faithful until death to JESUS![2] Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving, and honour and power, and might, be unto our GOD, for ever and ever. Amen."[3]

Ye empty triumphs of earth, ye false honours, ye delusive glories of this place of exile, vanish, oh vanish! Never shall ye be the object of my desires. I hope this from the mercy of my holy LORD: ye shall never fill the least place in my heart. Disappear! ye are become burdensome to me, since I have caught a glimpse of the solid, true, and eternal glory which is reserved for me in heaven. Disappear! for your charms are deceitful, your pleasures are mingled with bitterness. I desire only heaven, because there I shall be with my LORD JESUS; there I shall love Him, there He will crown me.

O how sweet it is to be in paradise with JESUS! There the heart is fully satisfied; all its desires are fulfilled. There are no more tears, nor pain, nor sadness, nor grief; there, no more sickness, nor fear of death: and GOD Himself shall wipe away all the tears of His elect.[4]

[1] Cant. ii. 10—14.
[2] Rev. xi. 10.
[3] Rev. vii. 12.
[4] Rev. xxi. 4.

There I shall live in the society of saints and angels! If it be so sweet to converse of GOD here on earth, with a few chosen friends; if it be so sweet to speak together of the hope of loving each other one day eternally in paradise; if it be so comforting to confide to one another the happiness realised in the service of JESUS, and to encourage one another in loving Him still more; what then will it be to find oneself in the midst of that glorious company of saints, to converse intimately with each of them, to speak to GOD in His very Presence, to recall past dangers, and graces received, and to say, "We are for ever happy?" If it be so sweet to see again a mother, after a year's absence, what will it be to be reunited to her for ever, without the dread of future separation? If so sweet on earth to share the sorrows of a friend, O what will it be to share his joys in Paradise? O bright company of saints, when shall I be in the midst of you?

There I shall behold my GOD as He is.[1] Can anything be compared to so great a happiness? O my GOD, enable me to comprehend what Thou art, and then I shall conceive the felicity to be enjoyed in the contemplation of Thy loveliness.

I have seen the most brilliant flowers; I have looked upon them in all the lustre of their attire; I have admired the delicacy of their texture, and the variety of their colouring; and filled with wonder I have said, "Beautiful are the children of spring!" But O my GOD, is this Thy loveliness? Beautiful is this earth, given to us for our abode. Its meadows are enamelled with flowers, its mountains covered with vines, branching forth in long festoons; its hillocks laid out with vineyards, its hedges

[1] 1 S. John iii. 2.

filled with odoriferous plants. Trees of every variety adorn and enrich it with their fruits; streams emerging from its bosom carry everywhere fertility and abundance. Yes, beautiful is the earth we inhabit. But O my GOD, is this Thy loveliness?

Beautiful is a forest with its tufted trees, and cool shade. There, all is calm and peaceful; the song of birds alone is heard, or the murmuring of a stream which falls from the summit of the mountain, or the gentle rustling of leaves which the zephyr disturbs. Beautiful is a forest with its tranquil solitude! But O my GOD, is this Thy loveliness?

Beautiful is a fertile country, whether the hand of spring spread thereupon a green carpet, studded with a thousand budding flowers; or whether summer gild the ears of corn, gladdening the reapers; or whether autumn tint the grapes with purple; or whether, lastly, winter shroud it in a sheet of dazzling whiteness, and the hoar frost clinging to the trees, transform them into so many plumes, lifting themselves up in grandeur heavenwards! But O my GOD, is this Thy loveliness?

Beautiful is the ocean, under whatever aspect it presents itself to us. Now its waves are still, and ripple murmuringly one over the other; and then it is a sheet of glass, reflecting the mild azure of the sky. Again these become angry, and cast themselves up with fury into the clouds: the sun's rays pierce through and play in these mountainous waves, which might then be said to be mountains of fire, dashing themselves to pieces against the rocks on the shore. O beautiful is the ocean! But O my GOD, is this Thy loveliness?

Beautiful is the dawn when it appears to announce to us the approach of sunrise, adorning the east with the

richest and most glowing colours, showing it forth as though on fire. Beautiful is the early dawn! But O my GOD, is this Thy loveliness?

Beautiful is the light of the sun, which goes forth each day as a giant to run his course, blazoning throughout the universe the glory of his Creator! But O my GOD, is this Thy loveliness?

Beautiful is a summer's evening! On one side the sun hides his last rays behind clouds fringed with gold and azure: on the other the moon rides up majestically on the horizon: the spacious firmament of heaven is spread with millions of glistening stars. What a spectacle! how many times has not my heart thereby been moved to shed abundant tears! how often has it not drawn from my heart this exclamation of the prophet: "LORD, how beautiful are Thy works!" but once more, O my GOD, is this Thy loveliness?

No: Thy beauty is wholly spiritual, and nothing here below can give me a just idea thereof. O my GOD, if Thy works be thus lovely, wonderful and ravishing, what must Thou be Thyself? If there be so much of pure joy in contemplating the wonders of nature, when Thou hast cast the shadow of Thy splendour and perfections, what will it be to see Thee face to face? . . . . But here let me pause: my pen can depict no further the happiness of seeing and loving Thee.

O most blessed abode of the Eternal City! O bright and everlasting day, which night will never more succeed: enlightened perpetually by the rays of sovereign truth: unchangeable day of joy and repose, which no vicissitude can trouble, when wilt thou shine for me? when will the end of my evils arrive? when shall I be

set free from my sorrows? O gracious JESUS! when will it be granted me to see Thee, to contemplate the glory of Thy reign? when to be with Thee in the kingdom Thou hast prepared from all eternity for Thy elect? I am abandoned, poor, and exiled, in an enemy's land, where are perpetual wars and great afflictions. Comfort me in my exile! soften the agony of my heart, which sighs for Thee with all the intensity of desire. All which the world offers me as comfort is burdensome to me. O JESUS, I desire Thee only: give me Thy Paradise, that I may there love Thee perfectly, and throughout eternity. Give it also to my relatives and friends. Give it also to many poor souls whom hell is about to engulf, and we will all praise Thee and bless Thee, and love Thee throughout all ages. Amen.

Practical Resolutions.

TO LET THE THOUGHT OF HEAVEN ENCOURAGE US IN THE SERVICE OF GOD.

What more shall I say to thee, my dear Theotime, but that thou must labour energetically to deserve heaven? Our LORD has warned us that heaven is not for the indolent, and that it must be obtained by violence.[1] Profit thou by this warning. Descend into the depth of thy conscience, and see if there be therein no mortal sin. No: by the mercy of GOD. Then thou art in the road to Paradise: continue to walk therein, and forget not that he alone shall be crowned who shall have striven to the end.[2] Endure with patience and resignation the ills, privations, weariness, reverses of this corruptible life; resist

[1] S. Matth. xi. 12. [2] 2 Tim. ii. 5.

the dangerous suggestions of the enemy of thy salvation; strive to become humble, patient, and mortified; all thy sufferings shall quickly pass away, but the glory of the reward is eternal.[1] O Theotime, in whatsoever difficult position thou find thyself, look to heaven, and thou wilt be strengthened. If the devil torment thee and lay snares for thee, look to heaven, and he shall be conquered. If the world seek to gain thee by laying before thee its attractions and deceitful pleasures, look to heaven and it cannot injure thee. Take courage! thou shalt not be long struggling here, nor for ever laden with grief. Wait a little, and thou shalt soon see the end of thy affliction; for whatever is of time is of little importance, and is but fleeting. Write, read, sing, the praises of GOD: keep silence, pray, suffer, resolutely: eternal life is worthy of all this strife, and of more yet. Detach thyself from all earthly things, and from thyself, and repeat continually, "O JESUS, Thy kingdom come!"

Farewell, Theotime, farewell, but not for ever. Though I groan long beneath the weight of my numberless miseries, I trust in the mercy of my JESUS, and from His loving-kindness I look for that heaven He has merited for us. There shall our meeting be: there shall we see each other. In the meanwhile pray for me, and charitably commend me sometimes to our Divine LORD, that He may bless me, and give me that eternal reward of which I am unworthy. Farewell, till we be in Paradise, at the feet of JESUS, employed in chanting His mercy and His love. Farewell.

[1] 2 Cor. iv. 17.

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